

Resources for
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
and throughout the year

Your right hand, O Lord,
glorious in power
(Ex 15:6)

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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 undertake 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 FOR 2018

Exodus 15:1-21

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.

Pharaoh’s chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. TThe floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power— your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.’ You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by. You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. The Lord will reign for ever and ever”.

When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea”.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2018

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power

(Ex 15:6)

The Caribbean Region

Bearing the name of one of the groups of its indigenous peoples – the Kalinago people, formerly called the Caribs – the contemporary Caribbean region is a complex reality. The region's vast geographical spread includes both island and mainland territories containing a rich and diverse tapestry of ethnic, linguistic and religious traditions. It is also a complex political reality with a variety of governmental and constitutional arrangements, ranging from colonial dependencies (British, Dutch, French, and American) to republican nation states.

The contemporary Caribbean is deeply marked by the dehumanizing project of colonial exploitation. In the aggressive pursuit of mercantile gains, the colonisers codified brutal systems which traded human beings, and their forced labour. Initially, these practices enslaved and decimated and in some cases exterminated the region's indigenous peoples. This was followed by the enslavement of Africans and the "indentureship" of people from India and China.

At each stage, the systems of the colonisers attempted to strip subjugated peoples of their inalienable rights: their identity, their human dignity, their freedom and their self-determination. The enslavement of Africans was not simply a case of transporting labourers from one location to another. In an affront to God-given human dignity, it commodified the human person, making one human being the property of another. With the understanding of the enslaved as property went other practices that further sought to dehumanize the African. Included among these was the denial of the right to cultural and religious practices and to marriage and family life.

Very regrettably, during five hundred years of colonialism and enslavement, Christian missionary activity in the region, with the exception of a few outstanding examples, was closely tied to this dehumanizing system and in many ways rationalized it and reinforced it. Whereas those who brought the Bible to this region used the scriptures to justify their subjugation of a people in bondage, in the hands of the enslaved, it became an inspiration, an assurance that God was on their side, and that God would lead them into freedom.

The Theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018

Today Caribbean Christians of many different traditions see the hand of God active in the ending of enslavement. It is a uniting experience of the saving action of God which brings freedom. For this reason the choice of the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15:1-21), as the motif of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 was considered a most appropriate one. It is a song of triumph over oppression. This theme has been taken up in a hymn, *The Right Hand of God*, written in a workshop of the Caribbean Conference of Churches in August 1981, which has become an “anthem” of the ecumenical movement in the region, translated into a number of different languages.

Like the Israelites, the people of the Caribbean have a song of victory and freedom to sing and it is a song which unites them. However, contemporary challenges again threaten to enslave and again threaten the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God. While human dignity is inalienable it is often obscured by both personal sin and social structures of sin. In our fallen world societal relationships too often lack the justice and compassion that honour human dignity. Poverty, violence, injustice, addiction to drugs and pornography, and the pain, grief and anguish which follow, are experiences that distort human dignity.

Many of the contemporary challenges are themselves the legacy of a colonial past and slave trade. The wounded collective psyche is manifested today in social problems related to low self-esteem, gang and domestic violence, and damaged familial relationships. Although a legacy of the past, these issues are also exacerbated by the contemporary reality that many would characterize as neo-colonialism. Under existing circumstances it seems almost impossible for many of the nations of this region to pull themselves out of poverty and debt. Moreover, in many places there is a residual legislative framework that continues to be discriminatory.

The right hand of God that brought the people out of slavery, gave continued hope and courage to the Israelites, as it continues to bring hope to the Christians of the Caribbean. They are not victims of circumstance. In witnessing to this common hope the churches are working together to minister to all peoples of the region, but particularly the most vulnerable and neglected. In the words of the hymn, “the right hand of God is planting in our land, planting seeds of freedom, hope and love”.

Biblical - Pastoral reflection on the text (Ex 15:1-21)

The Book of Exodus takes us through three periods: the Israelites’ life in Egypt (1:1-15:21); Israel’s journey through the wilderness (15:22-18:27); and the Sinai experience (19-40). The passage chosen, the ‘Song at the Sea’ led by Moses and Miriam, details the events leading up to the redemption of the people of God from enslavement. It closes the first period.

“This is my God, and I will praise him” (15:2)

Verses 1-3 of chapter 15 emphasize the praise of God: “The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him” (15:2). In the song, led by Moses and Miriam, the Israelites sing the praises of the God who has freed them. They realize that the plan and purpose of God to set the people free cannot be thwarted or frustrated. No forces not even Pharaoh’s chariots, army and trained military power could frustrate the will of God for his people to be free (15:4-5). In this joyful cry of praise, Christians from many different traditions recognize that God is the Saviour of us all, we delight that he has kept his promises, and continues to bring his salvation to us through the Holy Spirit. In the salvation that he brings we recognize that he is our God and we are all his people.

“Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power” (15:6)

The liberation and salvation of God’s people comes through the power of God. The right hand of God can be understood both as God’s sure victory over his adversaries, and as his unfailing protection of his own people. In spite of the determination of Pharaoh, God heard the cry of his people and will not let the people perish because God is the God of life. By his control of wind and sea God shows his will to preserve life and to destroy violence (Ex 15:10). The purpose of this redemption was to constitute the Israelites as a people of praise recognizing God’s steadfast love.

The liberation brought hope and a promise for the people. Hope because a new day had dawned when the people could freely worship their God and realize their potential. It was also a promise: their God would accompany them throughout their journey and no force could destroy God’s purpose for them.

Does God use violence to counteract violence?

Some Church Fathers interpreted the narrative as a metaphor for the spiritual life. Augustine, for example, identified the enemy which is cast into the sea not as the Egyptians, but as sin.

“All our past sins, you see, which have been pressing on us, as it were from behind, he has drowned and obliterated in baptism. These dark things of ours were being ridden by unclean spirits as their mounts, and like horsemen they were riding them wherever they liked. That’s why the apostle calls them ‘rulers of this darkness’. We have been rid of all this through baptism, as through the Red Sea, so called because sanctified by the blood of the crucified Lord...” (Sermon 223E).

Augustine saw the story as encouraging the Christian to hope and to persevere, rather than despair, at the pursuit of the enemy. For Augustine baptism was the key constitutive event in establishing the true identity of each person as a member of

the Body of Christ. He draws a parallel between Israel's liberating passage through the Red Sea and that of the Christian people in baptism. Both liberating journeys bring a worshiping assembly into being. As such Israel could freely praise the saving hand of God in the victory song of Miriam and Moses. Their redemption constituted the enslaved Israelites as members of the one people of God, united with one song of praise to sing.

Unity

Exodus 15 allows us to see how the road to unity must often pass through a communal experience of suffering. The Israelites' liberation from enslavement is the foundational event in the constitution of this people. For Christians this process climaxes with the incarnation and Paschal mystery. Although liberation/salvation is an initiative taken by God, God engages human agencies in the realization of his purpose and plan for the redemption of his people. Christians, through baptism, share in God's ministry of reconciliation, but our own divisions hamper our witness and mission to a world in need of God's healing.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2018

The Churches of the Caribbean were chosen to draft the material for the 2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Under the leadership of His Grace Kenneth Richards, Catholic Archbishop of Kingston and Bishop with ecumenical responsibilities for the Antilles Episcopal Conference, together with Mr Gerard Granado, General Secretary of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), an ecumenical team of women and men were invited to draft the material.

Gratitude is extended in particular to the leaders of CCC, to the Antilles Episcopal Conference, and to those who contributed to these resources:

- Most Reverend Kenneth D. Richards - Coordinator of the Drafting Team on behalf of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC), Chairman of the AEC Ecumenism Commission, Archbishop of Kingston (Roman Catholic) [Jamaica]
- Mr Gerard A.J. Granado, M.Th. (Edinburgh) - General Secretary, Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC), Convener of Drafting Team (Roman Catholic) [Trinidad and Tobago]
- Professor Luis N. Rivera-Pagan – Prof. Emeritus of Ecumenics, Princeton Theological Seminary, N.Y. (Baptist) [Puerto Rico]
- Reverend Kirkley Sands, Ph.D. – Chaplain, Codrington Theological College, (Anglican) Church in the Province of the West Indies [Bahamas]
- Reverend Patmore Henry – Secretary, Connexional Conference, Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) [Antigua]
- Oluwakemi Linda Banks, Ph.D. - A President of CCC & Clinical Psychologist (Anglican) [Anguilla]
- Ms Nicole Poyer – Leader, Taizé (Ecumenical) Group, Trinidad and Tobago and Matriculating Masters student in Theology (Roman Catholic) [Trinidad and Tobago]
- Right Reverend Glenna Spencer – Bishop, Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas (MCCA) & former member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) [Guyana]
- Right Reverend Kingsley Lewis, Ph.D. – Bishop, Moravian Church (East West Indies Province), and President Emeritus of the CCC [Antigua]
- Reverend Elvis Elahie, M.Th. (Edinburgh) – Moderator Emeritus, Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT) and Principal Emeritus of St. Andrew's (Presbyterian) Theological College [Trinidad and Tobago]

- Reverend Marjorie Lewis, Ph.D. – President Emeritus, United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) (The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands) [Jamaica]
- Reverend George Mulrain, Ph.D. – Connexional President Emeritus, Connexional Conference, Methodist Church in the Caribbean & the Americas (MCCA) [Trinidad & Tobago]

The local drafting team presented the texts, prayers and reflections they had chosen or prepared to an international team sponsored jointly by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). At this meeting, held at Emmaus House in Nassau, Bahamas, 3-7 September 2016, the draft text was edited and finalised. The international team had the opportunity to visit the Pompey Museum of Slavery and Emancipation at Vendue House, a visit which helped the editorial team honour the struggles for freedom of the Bahamian and wider Caribbean people.

The international team would like to thank Archbishop Patrick Pinder and the Archdiocese of Nassau for their generosity in hosting us at the Emmaus Centre and to the staff who work there and made our stay so comfortable. We also wish to express our gratitude for the support of local ecumenical Church leaders, Reverend Dr Ranford Patterson, President of the Bahamas Christian Council, and the Right Reverend Laish Boyd, Diocesan Bishop, Anglican Diocese of The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Island, who joined the group to share their knowledge and experience of the local church.

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Introduction

The Bible and three sets of chains are integral to the celebration of this Worship Service. The Caribbean writing group suggests that these symbols are prominently placed in the worship space.

The Bible is especially important in the experience of the Caribbean Churches. Historically, indigenous and enslaved peoples experienced atrocities perpetrated by colonizers who, at the same time, brought Christianity. Yet, in the hands of the oppressed peoples of the region, the Bible became a primary source of consolation and liberation. This dynamic of reversal makes the Bible a particularly potent symbol in itself. Therefore, in this service, it is important that a visually significant Bible be placed in the midst of the gathered assembly and that the readings be proclaimed from this same Bible rather than from other books or booklets.

Chains are a very potent symbol of enslavement, dehumanization and racism. They are also a symbol of the power of sin which separates us from God and from each other. The Caribbean writing group encourages the use of real iron chains during the Prayers of Reconciliation in this Worship Service. If iron chains are not feasible, alternative visually strong chains should be used. During the Worship Service, the iron chains of enslavement are replaced by a human chain expressing bonds of communion and united action against modern slavery and all kinds of individual and institutionalised dehumanisation. Inviting the entire assembly to participate in this gesture is an integral part of the worship.

For the song after the proclamation of the Word, the Caribbean writing group suggests the hymn *The Right Hand of God*. Reflecting the song of Miriam and Moses in praise of the liberating action of God in the Book of Exodus, it is associated with the ecumenical movement in the Caribbean, as the Churches work together to overcome the social challenges facing the people of the region.

Order of the Service

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power

(Ex 15:6)

- L** Leader
- C** Congregation
- R** Reader

Gathering

Song

During the singing of the song, those leading the celebration enter. They should be led by an assistant carrying the Bible. The Bible is placed in a place of honour in the centre of the worship space. The Scripture readings during the service should be proclaimed from this Bible.

Words of Welcome

L The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

L Dear friends in Christ, as we gather for this service of prayer for unity, we thank God for our Christian heritage, and for his liberating and saving action in human history.

The resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the churches of the Caribbean. The history of Christianity in that region contains a paradox. On one hand, the Bible was used by colonizers as justification for the subjugation of the original inhabitants of these lands, along with others who were transported from Africa, India and China. Many people suffered extermination, were put in chains and enslaved, and were subjected to unjust labour conditions. On the other hand, the Bible became a source of consolation and liberation for many who suffered at the hands of the colonizers.

Today, the Bible continues to be a source of consolation and liberation, inspiring the Christians of the Caribbean to address the conditions that currently undermine human dignity and quality of life. As the iron chains of

enslavement fall from our hands, a new human bond of love and communion emerges in the human family, expressing the unity prayed for by our Christian communities.

Invocation of the Holy Spirit

The response to the invocation may be sung.

L With the Christians of the Caribbean, let us call upon the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire as we pray for the unity of the Church.

Unite your servants in the bond of unity.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Teach us to pray.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Liberate us from the slavery of sin.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Help us in our weakness.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Restore us as your children.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Song of praise

Prayers of Reconciliation

L We have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Let us call upon the mercy of God, confident in the saving power of God's Right Hand.

Three members of the assembly come forward, each carrying a chain. After each petition and response, one of the chains is allowed fall to the ground. The Kyrie response may be sung.

L From structures that undermine human dignity and enforce new forms of enslavement, deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

C **Kyrie eleison.**

L From decisions and deeds that impose poverty, marginalisation or discrimination on our brothers and sisters, deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

C **Kyrie eleison.**

L From the fear and suspicion that separate us from each other and place limits on hope and healing, deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

C **Kyrie eleison.**

L The Lord is our strength and our might, and has become our salvation. May God, who has redeemed us, lead into the abode of holiness.

C **Amen.**

Proclamation of the Word of God

L Redeem us, O God, from human oppression,

C **that we may keep your precepts.**

L Make your face shine upon your servants,

C **and teach us your statutes.** (cf Ps 119:134-135)

Exodus 15:1-21

L Listen and you will be set free.

C **Thanks be to God.**

It would be preferable for the psalm to be sung.

Psalm 118:5-7, 13-24

R/ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures for ever!

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.

With the Lord on my side I do not fear.

What can mortals do to me?

The Lord is on my side to help me;

I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. **R/**

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the Lord helped me.
The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.
There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous. **R/**

The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.
I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord. **R/**

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.
This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it. **R/**

I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it. **R/**

Romans 8:12-27

L Listen and you will be set free.

C **Thanks be to God.**

A suitable Alleluia acclamation may be sung and after before the proclamation of the Gospel.

Mark 5:21-43

L Listen and you will be set free.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Homily / Sermon

Song

The right hand of God

Patrick Prescod

Noel Dexter: Jamaica

1. The right hand of God is writ-ing in our land,
 2. The right hand of God is point-ing in our land,
 3. The right hand of God is strik-ing in our land,
 4. The right hand of God is lift-ing in our land,

6

writ - ing with pow - er and with love; Our
 point - ing the way we must go; so
 strik - ing out at en - vy, hate and greed; Our
 lift - ing the fal - len one by one; Each

10

con - flicts and our fears, our tri - umphs and our
 cloud - ed is the way, so eas - i - ly we
 self - ish - ness and lust, our pride and deeds un -
 one is known by name, and res - cued now from

13

tears are re - cord - ed by the right hand of God.
 stray, but we're guid - ed by the right hand of God.
 just are de - stroyed by the right hand of God.
 shame by the lift - ing of the right hand of God.

5. The right hand of God is healing in our land,
healing broken bodies, minds and souls;
so wondrous is its touch,
with love that means so much,
when we're healed by the right hand of God.
6. The right hand of God is planting in our land,
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;
in these many-peopled lands,
let his children all join hands,
and be one with the right hand of God.

The Apostles Creed

Prayers of the People

- L** With thanks for our liberation from slavery to sin, let us place our needs before the Lord, asking him to shatter the chains that enslave us and to join us instead with bonds of love and communion.

Each intercession is read by a different reader. As they finish, the readers each join hands or link arms with members of the assembly, thus creating a human chain.

- R1** God of the Exodus, you led your people through the waters of the Red Sea and redeemed them. Be with us now and free us from all forms of slavery and from everything that obscures human dignity.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

- R2** God of abundance, in your goodness you provide for all our needs. Be with us now, help us to rise above selfishness and greed and give us the courage to be agents of justice in the world.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

- R3** God of love, you created us in your image and have redeemed us in Christ. Be with us now, empower us to love our neighbour and to welcome the stranger.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

- R4** God of peace, you remain faithful to your covenant with us even when we wander from you, and in Christ you have reconciled us to yourself. Be with us now and put a new spirit and a new heart within us that we may reject violence and instead be servants of your peace.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

R5 God of glory, you are all-powerful, yet in Jesus you chose to make your home in a human family, and in the waters of Baptism have adopted us as your children. Be with us now and help us to remain faithful to our family commitments and our communal responsibilities, and to strengthen the bonds of communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

R6 God, One in Three Persons, in Christ you have made us one with you and with one another. Be with us now and by the power and consolation of the Holy Spirit, free us from the self-centredness, arrogance and fear that prevent us from striving towards the full visible unity of your Church.

C **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

The Lord's Prayer

L Let us join our hands, bound not by chains but by the love of Christ that has been poured into our hearts, and pray to the Father in the words that Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer may be sung.

Our Father.....

After the Lord's Prayer, still holding hands, the assembly may sing a familiar song that celebrates their unity.

After the song, the Sign of Peace may be exchanged.

Commissioning

L Redeemed by the Right Hand of God, and united in the One Body of Christ, let us go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

C **The Spirit of the Lord is upon us,
because the Lord has anointed us
to bring good news to the poor.
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.
Amen! Alleluia!**

Song

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

Day 1 You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt

Leviticus 19:33-34 You shall love the alien as yourself
Psalm 146 The Lord watches over the strangers
Hebrews 13:1-3 Some have entertained angels without knowing it
Matthew 25:31-46 I was a stranger and you welcomed me

After becoming the first independent black republic, Haiti extended hospitality to other enslaved peoples in search of freedom. Recent times have brought severe economic hardship to Haitians, many of whom have left home, making perilous journeys in hope of a better life. In many instances they have been met with inhospitality and legal barriers. The Caribbean Council of Churches has been involved in advocacy to challenge those nations that are restricting or stripping Haitians of citizenship rights.

Reflection

The Israelites' memory of being strangers in the land of Egypt lay behind the Law's instruction that God's people were to welcome the stranger in their midst. The memory of their own exile was expected to prompt empathy and solidarity with contemporary exiles and strangers. Like Israel, our common Christian experience of God's saving action goes together with remembering both alienation and estrangement - in the sense of estrangement from God and from his kingdom. This kind of Christian remembering has ethical implications. God has restored our dignity in Christ, and made us citizens of his kingdom, not because of anything we did to deserve it but by his own free gift in love. We are called to do likewise, freely and motivated by love. Christian love is to love like the Father, that is to recognize dignity and to give dignity, and thereby to help bring healing to the broken human family.

Prayer

Eternal God,
You belong to no culture and land but are Lord of all,
you call us to welcome the stranger in our midst.
Help us by your Spirit,
to live as brothers and sisters,
welcoming all in your name,
and living in the justice of your kingdom.
This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

*The right hand of God
is planting in our land,
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;
in these many-peopled lands,
let his children all join hands,
and be one with the right hand of God.*

Day 2 No longer as a slave but a beloved brother

Genesis 1:26-28	God created humankind in God's own image
Psalms 10:1-10	Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?
Philemon	No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother
Luke 10:25-37	The Parable of the Good Samaritan

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which victims are forced or tricked into sex work, child labour and the harvesting of organs for the profit of the exploiters. It is a global, multimillion-dollar industry. It is also a growing problem across the Caribbean. Reformed Churches in the Caribbean have joined with the Council for World Mission and the Caribbean and North American Council for Mission to educate Christian communities to end the scourge of human trafficking.

Reflection

One of the first things we learn about God in the Hebrew and Christian Bible is that God created humankind in his own image. However, this profound and beautiful truth has often been obscured or denied throughout human history. For instance, in the Roman Empire, the dignity of those enslaved was denied. The Gospel message is entirely different to this. Jesus challenged the social norms that devalued the human dignity of Samaritans, describing the Samaritan as the 'neighbour' of the man who had been attacked on the road to Jericho – a neighbour to be loved, according to the Law. And Paul, made bold in Christ, describes the once-enslaved Onesimus as 'a beloved brother', transgressing the norms of his society and affirming Onesimus's humanity.

Christian love must always be a courageous love that dares to cross borders, recognising in others a dignity equal to our own. Like St Paul, Christians must be 'bold enough in Christ' to raise a united voice in clearly recognising trafficked persons as their neighbours and their beloved brothers and sisters, and so work together to end modern-day slavery.

Prayer

Gracious God,
draw near to those who are victims of human trafficking,
assuring them that you see their plight and hear their cry.
May your Church be united in compassion and courage to work for that day
when no one will be exploited
and all will be free to live lives of dignity and peace.
This we pray in the name of the Triune God
who can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is lifting in our land,
lifting the fallen one by one;
each one is known by name,
and rescued now from shame,
by the lifting of the right hand of God.*

Day 3 Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit

Exodus 3:4-10	God frees those who are in human bondage
Psalms 24:1-6	Lord, we are the people who seek your face
1 Corinthians 6:9-20	Therefore glorify God in your body
Matthew 18:1-7	Woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

Many Christian churches in the Caribbean share a concern about the issue of pornography, especially via the internet. Pornography has destructive consequences for human dignity, particularly for children and young people. Like slavery, it commodifies human beings, ensnares those addicted to it and damages wholesome loving relationships.

Reflection

The book of Exodus demonstrates God's concern for people in human bondage. God's revelation to Moses at the burning bush was a powerful declaration of his will to free his people. God observed their misery, heard their cry and so came to deliver them. God still hears the cry of those who are subject to enslavement today, and wills to deliver them. While sexuality is a gift of God for human relationships and the expression of intimacy, the misuse of this gift through pornography enslaves and devalues both those caught up in producing it and those who consume

it. God is not impervious to their plight and Christians are called to be similarly concerned.

St Paul writes that we are called to give glory to God in our own bodies, which means that every part of our lives, including our relationships, can and should be an offering pleasing to God. Christians must work together for the kind of society that upholds human dignity and does not put a stumbling block before any of God's little ones, but, rather, enables them to live in the freedom which is God's will for them.

Prayer

By your heavenly grace, O God,
restore us in mind and body,
create in us a clean heart and a pure mind
that we may give glory to your Name.
May the churches attain unity of purpose
for the sanctification of your people,
through Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is healing in our land,
healing broken bodies, minds and souls;
so wondrous is its touch,
with love that means so much,
when we're healed
by the right hand of God.*

Day 4 Hope and Healing

Isaiah 9:2-7a	His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
Psalms 34:1-14	Seek peace, and pursue it
Revelation 7:13-17	God will wipe away every tear from their eyes
John 14:25-27	Peace I leave with you

Within the Caribbean, violence is a problem to which the churches are called to respond. There is an alarmingly high rate of murder, much of which stems from domestic abuse, gang warfare and other forms of criminality. There is also a rising rate of self-harm and suicide in some parts of the region.

Reflection

The kingdom which God promised, the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed and made manifest in his ministry, is a kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. What does this Good News mean for those trapped in the darkness of violence? In the prophet's vision, light shone on those who lived in a land of deep darkness. But how can Christians bring the light of Jesus to those living in the darkness of domestic and gang violence? What sense of hope can Christians offer? It is a sad reality that division among Christians is a counter-sign, which hampers the communication of hope.

However, the quest for peace and reconciliation between the different churches and confessions is the opposite of that. When Christians strive for unity in a world of conflict, they offer the world a sign of reconciliation. Christians who refuse to enter a logic of privilege and status, who refuse to demean others and their communities, give witness to the peace of God's kingdom, where the Lamb guides the saints to springs of the water of life. This is a peace the world needs, and one which brings healing and comfort to those afflicted by violence.

Prayer

God of all comfort and hope,
your resurrection defeated the violence of the cross.
As your people,
may we be a visible sign
that the violence of the world will be overcome.
This we pray in the name of our risen Lord.
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is pointing in our land,
pointing the way we must go;
so clouded is the way,
so easily we stray,
but we're guided by the right hand of God.*

Day 5

Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land!

Deuteronomy 1:19-35

Psalms 145:9-20

James 1:9-11

Luke 18:35-43

The Lord God goes before you and carried you

The Lord upholds all who are falling

The rich will disappear like a flower in the field

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

The Caribbean economies have traditionally been based on the production of raw materials for the European market and so have never been self-sustaining. As a consequence, borrowing on the international market became important for development. The requirements of such borrowing impose a reduction of spending on transport, education, health and other public services, which impacts most severely on the poor. The Caribbean Conference of Churches has launched an initiative to address the current debt crisis in the region and through their international networks to come to the aid of the poor.

Reflection

We can imagine the noise of the crowd as Jesus enters Jericho. Many voices shout down the cry of the blind beggar. He is a distraction and an embarrassment. But through all this tumult Jesus hears the blind man's voice, just as God always hears the cries of the poor in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Lord who upholds the falling not only hears, he responds. Thereby, the beggar's life is radically transformed.

The disunity of Christians can become part of the world's tumult and chaos. Like the arguing voices outside Jericho, our divisions can drown out the cry of the poor. However, when we are united we become more fully Christ's presence in the world, better able to hear, listen and respond. Rather than increasing the volume of discord, we are able to truly listen and so discern the voices that most need to be heard.

Prayer

Loving God,
you lift up the poor and distressed
and restore their dignity.
Hear now our cries for the poor of our world,
restore their hope and lift them up,
that all your people may be one.
This we pray in Jesus name.
Amen.

The right hand of God

*is lifting in our land,
lifting the fallen one by one;
each one is known by name,
and rescued now from shame,
by the lifting of the right hand of God.*

Day 6 **Let us look to the interests of others**

Isaiah 25:1-9	Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation
Psalms 82	Maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute
Philippians 2:1-4	Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others
Luke 12:13-21	Be on your guard against all kinds of greed

Changing international banking regulations continue to have a negative impact on the trade and commerce of the Caribbean and threaten the economic survival of many families. It has become increasingly difficult for Caribbean people working abroad to send money back to their families. The Churches in the Caribbean introduced the Credit Union movement in order for the poor to have access to finance for economic activity.

Reflection

The witness of the Scriptures is consistent that God always makes a preferential option for the poor: the right hand of God acts for the powerless against the powerful. Similarly, Jesus consistently warns against the dangers of greed. Despite these warnings, however, the sin of greed often infects our Christian communities and introduces a logic of competition: one community competing against the next. We need to remember that insofar as we fail to differentiate ourselves from the world, but conform to its divisive competing spirit, we fail to offer ‘a refuge for the needy in distress, a shelter from the storm’.

For our different churches and confessions, to be rich in the sight of God is not a case of having many members belonging – or donating – to one’s own community. Rather, it is to recognise that as Christians we have countless brothers and sisters right across the world, united across the economic divisions of ‘North’ and ‘South’. Conscious of this fraternity in Christ, Christians can join hands in promoting economic justice for all.

Prayer

Almighty God,
give courage and strength to your church
to continually proclaim justice and righteousness
in situations of domination and oppression.
As we celebrate our unity in Christ,
may your Holy Spirit help us
to look to the needs of others.
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is striking in our land,
striking out at envy, hate and greed;
our selfishness and lust,
our pride and deeds unjust,
are destroyed by the right hand of God.*

Day 7 Building family in household and church

Exodus 2:1-10	The birth of Moses
Psalms 127	Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain
Hebrews 11:23-24	Moses was hidden by his parents ... because they saw that the child was beautiful
Matthew 2:13-15	Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt

In the Caribbean the family continues to be adversely affected by the legacy of enslavement and by new factors such as the migration of parents, financial problems and domestic violence. Facing this reality, the churches of the Caribbean are working to give support to both nuclear and extended families.

Reflection

Families are of central importance for the protection and nurture of children. The Bible accounts of the infancies of both Moses and Jesus, who were in mortal danger from the moment they were born because of the murderous orders of angry rulers, illustrate how vulnerable children can be to external forces. These stories also show how action can be taken to protect such little ones. Matthew presents us with a model of fatherhood that is in loving fidelity to the Lord's command, especially in turbulent times.

The Scriptures view children as a blessing and as hope for the future. For the Psalmist, they are ‘like arrows in the hand of a warrior’. As Christians, we share a common calling to live as supportive family networks, relying on the strength of the Lord for the task of building strong communities in which children are protected and can flourish.

Prayer

Gracious God,
you sent your son to be born in an ordinary family
with ancestors who were both faithful and sinful.
We ask your blessing upon all families
within households and communities.
We pray especially for the unity of the Christian family
so that the world may believe.
In Jesus’ name we pray,
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is writing in our land,
writing with power and with love;
our conflicts and our fears,
our triumphs and our tears,
are recorded by the right hand of God.*

Day 8

He will gather the dispersed... from the four corners of the earth

Isaiah 11:12-13	Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not be hostile towards Ephraim
Psalms 106:1-14, 43-48	Gather us to give thanks to your holy name
Ephesians 2:13-19	He has broken down the dividing wall
John 17:1-12	I have been glorified in them

The Caribbean churches work together to heal the wounds in the Body of Christ in the region, which are a legacy left by colonization. Reconciliation often demands repentance, reparation and the healing of memories. One example is the acts of apology and reparation between Baptists in Britain and the Caribbean. Like Israel, the Church in its unity is called to be both a sign and an active agent of reconciliation.

Reflection

Throughout the biblical narrative of salvation history, an unmistakable motif is the unrelenting determination of the Lord to form a people whom he could call his own. The formation of such a people – united in a sacred covenant with God – is integral to the Lord’s plan of salvation and to the glorification and hallowing of God’s Name.

The prophets repeatedly remind Israel that the covenant demanded that relationships among its various social groups should be characterized by justice, compassion and mercy. As Jesus prepared to seal the new covenant in his own blood, his earnest prayer to the Father was that those given to him by the Father would be one, just as he and the Father were one. When Christians discover their unity in Jesus they participate in Christ’s glorification in the presence of the Father, with the same glory that he had in the Father’s presence before the world existed. And so, God’s covenanted people must always strive to be a reconciled community - one which itself is an effective sign to all the peoples of the earth of how to live in justice and in peace.

Prayer

Lord,
we humbly ask that, by your grace,
the churches throughout the world
may become instruments of your peace.
Through their joint action as ambassadors
and agents of your healing, reconciling love
among divided peoples,
may your Name be hallowed and glorified.
Amen.

*The right hand of God
is planting in our land,
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;
in these many-peopled lands,
let his children all join hands,
and be one with the right hand of God.*

THE ECUMENICAL SITUATION IN THE CARIBBEAN *

The Caribbean region stretches from the Bahamas in the north to Suriname, Guyana and French Guiana (Cayenne) on the South American mainland, and from Barbados in the east to Belize in Central America in the west. The common identity of the Region is based on geographical considerations as well as on a shared history of colonialism, exploitation and resistance against foreign domination, and on a common cultural awareness.

The presence of some of the churches in the Region – e.g. the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches - coincides with the beginning and early period of the colonial enterprise. Other churches came later as part of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century missionary movement. Even more recently, the evangelical and pentecostal movements have spread throughout the Caribbean. Consequently, evangelical alliances or fellowships can be found in many countries and territories of the Region.

The Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC) grew out of a dynamic precursor of ecumenical activity in the 1960s and was formally established during the socio-cultural and political ferment of the early 1970s. This was the immediate post-colonial period of the Region during which many countries gained their political independence. It was a time when the Region as a whole was enveloped in a movement towards self-determination, development and new forms of self-expression. The joint response and contribution of several churches to this new regional awareness was the formation of an organisation called Christian Action for Development in the Caribbean (CADEC). This organisation is the precursor of the CCC, and would later become one of two major departments of the CCC. The other department was known as the Agency for Renewal of the Churches (ARC).

The founding assembly of the CCC took place in 1973, in Kingston, Jamaica. The preamble of its constitution reads:

We, as Christian people of the Caribbean, because of our common calling in Christ, covenant to join together in a regional fellowship of churches for theological reflection, inspiration, consultation, and cooperative action, to overcome the challenges created by history, language, culture, class and distance. We are therefore deeply committed to promoting peace, the holistic development of our people and affirming social justice and the

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dignity of all persons. We pledge to journey together in Christ and to share our experiences for the strengthening of the kingdom of God in the world.

The thirty three member churches of the CCC represent a vast diversity of people and cultures, spread over many islands and mainland territories of South and Central America and belonging to four major linguistic groupings – Dutch, English, French and Spanish. Included in this grouping are: Cayenne (French Guiana), Cuba, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Martinique and Puerto Rico. The CCC's member churches share the common conviction that, despite the divisiveness of the long colonial heritage, there is an authentic, unifying Caribbean identity through which Caribbean people must articulate God's will for them and make their response to it.

As one of six Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs), the CCC is historically unique, being the first instance in the world in which the Roman Catholic Church – formally through its bishops' conference - was a founding member of an REO. The involvement of the Antilles Episcopal Conference (AEC) as a founding member of the CCC was held up as an example in the preparatory document – “Lineamenta” – for the Roman Catholic Church's 1997 Synod of the Americas. In the section of the document entitled “Areas and Ways of Communion,” the document states: “One example of greater possibility for dialogue with other confessions is demonstrated by the work of some bishops of the Caribbean, who contributed to the founding of the only ecumenical organisation present in the region” (Section IV, Art. 42).

Over the forty three years of its existence, the CCC's member churches have together taken many initiatives in the areas of theology, Christian education, integral development, youth and women's concerns, family life, human rights, and communications. Some of the significant achievements of the CCC have been the media channels *Contact and Caribbeat*, the *Caribbean Contact* monthly newspaper and the Christian education series - *Fashion Me a People*.

In 1983, the CCC's mandate was re-formulated to read: “Promoting ecumenism and social change in obedience to Jesus Christ and in solidarity with the poor”. Since then, the Conference has developed a strategic approach and implemented an integrated programmatic response to the many socio-economic issues and social ills impacting the Caribbean. Among these are endemic poverty, a high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection, drug-trafficking and addiction, and uprootedness as persons are displaced for various reasons – including natural disasters, violence and the search of work and a better life.

The policy of the CCC is a deeper ecclesial engagement with, and mutual accompaniment of the member churches, through their existing agencies and institutions, and right down to the local congregations. The major programme initiatives are:

- Priority Regional Initiatives (HIV/AIDS, drugs, violence, family, food, uprooted people)
- Sustainable Socio-economic Development (poverty reduction, project funding, disaster preparedness)
- Advocacy and Communications (public awareness, information, dialogue and exchange)
- International Relations (regional integration, solidarity visits), and cultural affairs.

In addressing some of these issues, the CCC works very closely with major regional intergovernmental organisations, chief among these being the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). It has also engaged over the years with various departments of the United Nations (UN) and European and North American governments.

In addition to the above initiatives, the CCC established a Regional Forum of National Councils of Churches (NCCs), as a space for greater networking and mutual accompaniment of these councils in the region. This was in recognition of the critical role played by NCCs in several parts of the Region, some NCCs – e.g. the Cuban and Jamaican NCCs – pre-dating the CCC by decades. The Forum was first convened in 2001 under the theme: “*Sing a New Song*” It met annually thereafter until 2008. Like some other initiatives, the Regional Forum had to be curtailed because of significantly reduced funding to the organisation.

In recent times, a greater emphasis on the *theological* basis of Ecumenism is being pursued by the CCC’s Secretariat in conversation with member churches. This is in an effort to strengthen the fundamental issue of “*koinonia*” which, it is felt, has been somewhat obscured by an over-emphasis on “*diakonia*.” In this regard, a measure has been taken to ensure, not only that discussions on these and other “faith and order” issues take place, but also to ensure that there is a “*space of hospitality*” where members of various dominations – theologians, clergy and others – can encounter one another in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and edification. With these objectives in mind, the *Caribbean Regional Centre for Ecumenical Encounter & Dialogue* was launched in December 2014. The creation of this Centre is a collaborative venture between the CCC and the monks of the century-old Benedictine Monastery of *Our Lady of Exile* – popularly known as /Mount St. Benedict’ – in Trinidad. (Given its historical pastoral ministry to people of many different religious persuasions, the Monastery was seen as a natural setting and choice for such an initiative).

There has also been a new engagement by the CCC with other ecumenical expressions and configurations – e.g. the Taizé movement and the Caribbean ‘chapter’ of the Global Christian Forum (GCF). The latter is an important means of outreach and dialogue with Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians. The CCC has actually acted as convener / facilitator of the Caribbean GCF.

Apart from the CCC, there are other institutional expressions of ecumenism in the Caribbean. One such outstanding manifestation is The United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI), located in Jamaica. As an institution, the UTCWI is a collaborative venture of various Protestant denominations. Interestingly, the UTCWI is located next to the Roman Catholic Theological College (and former seminary) of St. Michael’s. The lecturers and students of both institutions have enjoyed a very amicable and mutually edifying relationship over the several years of the institutions’ existence.

On a wider Regional level, there is also the Caribbean Association Theological Schools (CATS). This organisation brings together in a collaborative manner the four major theological colleges of the Anglophone Caribbean – UTCWI; Codrington (Anglican) College, (Barbados); and the two Roman Catholic Colleges: St. John Vianney and the Uganda Martyrs, (Trinidad), and St. Michael’s (Jamaica).

In terms of Protestant ecumenical theological colleges in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, there is the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico and the Evangelical Seminary of Matanzas, Cuba. Both institutions are collaborative ventures of various Protestant denominations. The latter is currently headed by the Rev. Dr. Carlos Emilio Ham, a former President of the CCC and a former staff member of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

No consideration of the ecumenical situation in the Caribbean would be complete without noting that the Caribbean made a tremendous gift to the wider ecumenical movement in the person of the Rev. Dr. Philip Alford Potter – the celebrated third General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Dr. Potter, now of sacred memory, was a Methodist minister and a native of the Commonwealth of Dominica. During his tenure as the General Secretary of the WCC (1972-1984), Rev. Potter fought the immoral apartheid regime of South Africa. It was also during his tenure of office that Pope John-Paul II – in response to an invitation of the WCC – made his historic visit to the headquarters of the WCC in Geneva, Switzerland. This was a major milestone in ecumenical relations between the Vatican and the WCC. It is estimated that there are currently thirteen member churches of the WCC in the Caribbean, representing 1.4 million Christians. Following in Rev. Potter’s footsteps, other Caribbean ecumenists continue to make significant contributions in the wider international ecumenical arena. Among these is the Rev. Neville Callam of Jamaica. Rev. Callam, the incumbent General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), was for many years a highly respected member of the WCC’s “Faith and Order Commission.”

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Themes 1968-2018

Materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used in 1968

- 1968 To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969 Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970 We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971 ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)
(Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)
- 1972 I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973 Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974 That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1975 God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)
(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
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches.
Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977 Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war.
Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978 No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)

- 1979 Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)
 (Material from Argentina – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980 Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)
 (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)
 (Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982 May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)
 (Material from Kenya – Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983 Jesus Christ - the life of the world (1 John 1:1-4)
 (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 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)
 (Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985 From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)
 (Material from Jamaica – Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986 You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)
 (Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) – Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987 United in Christ - a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)
 (Material from England – Preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)
- 1988 The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)
 (Material from Italy – Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989 Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12:5-6a)
 (Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990 That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)
 (Material from Spain – Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991 Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)

- (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)
(Material from Belgium – Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993 Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)
(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)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995 Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)
(Material from Faith and Order – Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996 Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22)
(Material from Portugal – Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997 We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)
(Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council – Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998 The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27)
(Material from France – Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999 He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)
(Material from Malaysia – Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000 Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)
(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches – Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001 I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)
(Material from Romania – Preparatory meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002 For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)
(Material CEEC and CEC – Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003 We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)
(Material churches in Argentina – Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004 My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)
(Material from Aleppo, Syria – Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)

- 2005 Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)
(Material from Slovakia – Preparatory meeting in Piestañy, Slovakia)
- 2006 Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them
(Matthew 18:18-20)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)
- 2007 He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)
(Material from South Africa – Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)
- 2008 Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)
(Material from USA – Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009 That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)
(Material from Korea – Preparatory meeting held in Marseilles, France)
- 2010 You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)
(Material from Scotland – Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011 One in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42)
(Material from Jerusalem – Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012 We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
(Material from Poland – Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)
- 2013 What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8)
(Material from India – Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)
- 2014 Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17)
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)
- 2015 Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4: 7)
(Material from Brazil – Preparatory meeting held in São Paulo, Brazil)
- 2016 Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)
(Material from Latvia – Preparatory meeting held in Rīga, Latvia)
- 2017 Reconciliation - The love of Christ compels us (2 Cor 5:14-20)
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Wittenberg, Germany)
- 2018 Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (Ex 15:6)
(Material from the Caribbean – Preparatory meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas)

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.

- 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).