INTRODUCTION

On 20 October 2010 the UN General Assembly resolved to observe the first week of February each year as World Interfaith Harmony Week. Emerging out of the acknowledgement that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace, the World Interfaith Harmony Week was started as a way to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith. The World Interfaith Harmony Week seeks to support and spread the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship, on a voluntary basis and according to their own religious traditions or convictions.

This order of service has been prepared by the office of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation of the World Council of Churches to enable Christian churches across the world to reflect on and spread the message of interfaith harmony during the World Interfaith Harmony Week. Churches are encouraged to adapt the order to suit their context – adding different elements as appropriate.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Either a chant (or) a gong / drum / shofar / double reed instrument / harp / cymbal / Tibetan bowl, or any other instrument available may be used to invite participants to the worship.

OPENING RESPONSES

(Lines in bold are read in unison)

L: Creator of all, source of our being and well-being, the eternal one, you pulled earth from the ground, shaped it in your own image, and blew into it the breath of life. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

All: We come before you as part of your creation to affirm your image in all people and to recognize your wondrous works in all creation.

L: Lord Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, “blessed are the peacemakers,” you said. Gifting your peace to us you called us to be ambassadors of reconciliation. Beautiful in your sight are the feet of the ones who proclaim peace.

All: We come before you to learn the ways of peace and walk and work with our neighbors in proclaiming peace for all.

L: Holy Spirit, you speak to each of us in our own language. You bring unity to the body. You reveal the deep things of God to us.
All: We come before you with openness to discern your voice and discover you afresh; even in places and faces that we least expect. Speak to us and inspire us so that, recognizing our unities and respecting our differences, we may build a culture of harmony and trust.

L: Triune God come to us now, even as we come to you in humility and faith. Talk to us, teach us and transform us.

All: By your grace, bring to completion the good work that you began within us. Amen.

SONG

“Come, O Prince of Peace”

VERSE 1

All: By your grace, bring to completion the good work that you began within us. Amen.

VERSE 2

SONG

CONFESSION

L: Created in the image of God, we are called not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what the will of God is. In repentance and in truth, let us confess our sins:

All: God of transformation, transform us by the renewing of our minds to discern your will.
As followers of Christ we are called to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, fall short of the truth; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. We repent for those moments when we have held back from showing love to the ones who are different from us.

All: God of love, transform us by the renewing of our minds to discern your will.

As followers of Christ we are called to be peacemakers. Christ Jesus tells us whatever good we do for the ‘Other,’ it as if we do it for Christ himself, whatever harm we do; it is as if we harm Christ himself. We repent for those moments when we haven’t pursued peace with our whole selves and instead have been overpowered by the temptation to choose violence as the path to peace.

All: God of peace, transform us by the renewing of our minds to discern your will.

As followers of Christ we are called not to bear false witness against our neighbor. We repent for those times when we have let walls of ignorance and prejudice come in the way of knowing our neighbors. We repent for those times when failed to speak the truth in love while bearing witness to Christ and refrained from speaking truth to power in the face of religious violence, especially against the vulnerable.

All: God of truth, transform us by the renewing of our minds to discern your will.

As followers of Christ we are called to be of the same mind as Christ Jesus. We are called to empty ourselves and serve the other. We repent for those times when we haven’t served others as Christ did – making a difference without counting the cost. We repent for the times we have been calculative in our serving and complicit in our silence.

All: God of grace, transform us by the renewing of our minds to discern your will.

Let us pray together:

All: Forgive us, Lord, in your infinite mercy so that our hands may be clean and our hearts prepared to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you our God. Amen.

Kyrie

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

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BIBLE READING

I John 4: 7-12 (other appropriate scriptural texts may be used)

God Is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

REFLECTION

SYMBOLIC ACT

L: Across different faith traditions, dust (leader lifts vessel), soil (leader lifts vessel), or clay (leader lifts vessel) serve as the material with which human life was created. In some traditions, they are used for healing rituals - for people or for the land. In others, they serve as a reminder of the fragility of life. Let us join in this symbolic act to remind ourselves of our unity, our responsibility and our vulnerability as human beings as we seek to make a difference in our world today.

L: This dust reminds us of our common humanity - that we come from dust and to dust we shall return. Yet from dust, God brings forth beautiful things.

(Leader picks up a handful of dust and slowly drops it into the bowl)

All: Let this dust help us to celebrate the unity of humanity amidst its diversity.

L: This soil reminds us of the curse on the land brought by human greed. It reminds us how in the name of land and in our struggles for this resource we have nurtured ancient grudges and created newer feuds. Yet in the gospel Jesus uses soil for the healing of the blind man.

(Leader picks up a handful of soil and slowly drops it into the bowl)

All: Let this soil remind us of our call to be agents of healing through generosity and grace.

L: This clay reminds us of the allegory of treasure held in clay jars. God places extraordinary promise in the most vulnerable of vessels—vessels such as our children who can be molded and shaped just like clay on the potter’s wheel, for good or for ill.

(Leader picks up a lump of clay and slowly drops it into the bowl)

All: Let this clay help us recognize the worth of our children and recall our responsibility to contribute to their thriving, respecting them as bearers of God’s promise.

L: The symbols of dust, soil and clay remind us of the context in which we are called to foster the fullness of life. Into this context may we sow those seeds that can help make a difference.

(The leader symbolically plants a few seeds and continues)
We sow now the seeds of friendship and freedom, of harmony and hospitality, of imagination and inspiration, of patience and perseverance. Even as we sow these seeds we are aware that of their fruits we may never eat, and under their shade we may never sit.

All: Yet we sow these in confidence and commitment – so that the world to be will be different from the world that is. We plant these seeds in faith, inspired by hope and seek to nurture them with love. Amen

SONG

*Dios de la esperanza*

Alvin Schutmaat

[Music notation]

Dios de la esperanza, da nos gozo y paz! al mundo en crisis, habla tu verdad. Dios de la justicia, manda vives de sa joie, sa paix. Que le Dieu de la justice et nos t’luz, luz y esperanza en la oscuridad. Que le Dieu de la juscice et nos t’luz, luz y esperanza en la oscuridad.

OREMOS POR LA PAZ. CANTEMOS DE TUA MOR. PRIONS, OEUVRONS POUR LA PAIX, CHANTONS, LE COEURPLEIN DE JOIE;

— Lucemos por la paz, vivons le royaume de Dieu,

[Music notation]

— Lucemos por la paz, vivons le royaume de Dieu,

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

The refrain of the previous song may be used as a response to the intercessory prayers:

Praying, let us work for peace,
Singing, share our joy with all,
Working for a world that’s new,
Faithful when we hear Christ’s call.

L: God the eternal healer, we pray for all victims of violence carried out in the name of religion. We pray for those who have suffered harm at the hands of those who claim to be faithful and those whose memories have been scarred by hate. Where there is hurt bring wholeness, where there is fear bring freedom.

All: (Singing) Praying, let us work for peace... Faithful when we hear Christ’s Call

L: God who sanctifies, we pray for children and young people across the world, remembering especially those who live in places marred by violence in the name of faith. Build communities with the commitment and resilience to resist all forms of religious extremism and radicalization. Raise up among our young people role models who will foster harmony and strive for the flourishing of all.

All: (Singing) Praying, let us work for peace... Faithful when we hear Christ’s Call

L: Wonderful counselor we pray for all religious and political leaders. Where there is abuse of faith give them the wisdom to see it. Where courage is needed grant courage. Where humility is needed, gift them humility. We pray for better ways to handle conflict, and we pray that the day when swords shall become plowshares may come quickly.

All: (Singing) Praying, let us work for peace... Faithful when we hear Christ’s Call

L: Almighty God, we lift up to you the following nations in the Ecumenical prayer cycle this week: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Tunisia. In places were strife is found, we pray for peace. For places that are thriving, we give thanks.

All: (Singing) Praying, let us work for peace... Faithful when we hear Christ’s Call

THE LORD’S PRAYER  (in a language of our choice)

BLESSING  (based on Ephesians 4:16-20)

And now may God strengthen you from within by the power of the Spirit.
May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.
May you comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge. And may you be filled with all the fullness of God. Amen