

**Worship on the Occasion of the Week of Action to  
#Fight Inequality  
18-25 January 2019**

## **Introduction**

We live in a time of glaring inequalities. Last year Forbes (2018) found 2,208 billionaires, collectively worth USD 9.1 trillion (<https://www.forbes.com/billionaires>). This tremendous wealth in the hands of a few is 900% more than the combined GDP of the 47 least developed countries (World Bank 2018).

Indeed in 2017 alone, billionaires saw their wealth increase by USD 800 billion – enough money to banish hunger and extreme poverty in the world seven times over (Oxfam 2018).

“Inequality fuels poverty, deepens the abuse of power, undermines social cohesion and threatens to pull our societies apart. [It] provokes violence, crime and insecurity at all levels of society. [It] denies millions of people...the ability to live full lives with dignity” (Sigtuna Statement on Diaconia in a Time of Inequality 2017).

The reduction of inequalities is one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals proclaimed by the United Nations. It is also a concern of the World Council of Churches which is part of the Fight Inequality Alliance that aims to “build a global movement to counter the excessive concentration of power and wealth in the hands of a small elite and achieve a just, equal and sustainable world” (<https://www.fightinequality.org/about.html>).

This week we celebrate two important events: the Week of Action to Fight Inequality and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which has as its theme for 2019, “justice and only justice you shall pursue” (Deuteronomy 16, 18-20).

As Christians we are a diverse, worldwide family. Jesus calls us to be the light of the world, to preach the good news to those that have less. Where can our worldwide network serve as a light in a world of tremendous inequalities? Where can the Holy Spirit help us to come together as one and discover our potential for enacting change?

We celebrate in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

*(Please rise as you are able.)*

## **Call to worship**

L: Let us worship the Triune God.  
God, our Father, you crown your creation with justice and mercy,  
All: **we come to worship you.**

L: Jesus Christ, your cross brings new life and justice,

**All: we come to worship you.**

L: Holy Spirit, you inspire our hearts to act justly,

**All: we come to worship you.**

L: May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
And the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

**All: And also with you.**

(Adapted from *Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019*)

## ♪ **Lumière de Dieu**

Sisters of Grandchamp: Switzerland



Lu - miè - re de Dieu, in - on - de la ter - re, vi -  
Come light, light of God, give light to cre - a - tion, en -  
Komm, gött - li - ches Licht, er - leuch - te die Er - de, er -  
Ven luz, luz de Dios, i - nun - da la tie - rra, vi -

si - te nos coeurs et de - meure a - vec nous.  
light - en our hearts and re - main with your world.  
füll uns - re Her - zen, nimm Woh - nung in uns.  
sí - ta - nos siem - pre y qué - da - te a - quí.

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## **Confession**

L: Let us pray:

Jesus, you have come so that *all* may have life in its fullness.

You endowed your followers with social and economic responsibility.

We want to be your servants. We strive for your kingdom.

And yet we see incredible inequalities of wealth, resources and power in the world, in our nations, even within our congregations.

## ♪ **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.*

L: Jesus, you see the obstacles in our lives, in our work, in our organisations.  
We need your guidance, your healing, your power.

## ♪ **Kyrie eleison**

L: Jesus, you have always sent your followers at least two together.  
We complete each other perfectly.  
Help us to see. Help us to strengthen one another with your love.  
Help us to become a strong, united movement of transformative faith.

♪ **Kyrie eleison**

**All: Oh Lord, we thank you for this wonderful planet that you have created.  
We thank you for the marvellous abundance and variety of your creation.  
We praise you Lord!  
We thank you for the possibility to come together here today.  
We thank you for each and everyone in our midst.  
Please open our hearts so that we can feel that you are here among us with your love  
and power and wisdom.  
We are here, tools in your hands – with different skills and talents, depending on one  
another. Help us to discern where you need us.  
Help us to build dreams that are big enough to fit in your vision for the world.  
Amen.**

*(Please sit.)*

### **First scripture reading (Psalm 24)**

R1: *<sup>1</sup>The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,  
the world, and all who live in it.*

God has created a world of abundance – an economy of more than enough – for “all who live in it.” However, we humans have created an economy of accumulation and profit, developing “laws” and policies that are illegitimate, and creating inequalities that cry out to heaven.

We have poisoned our lands, destroying within 70 years a diversity of flora and fauna that grew over billions of years. We continue to wage a war against God's beloved creation.

But as Christians we are called to: *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3, 15)*

### **Second scripture reading (1 Corinthians 12)**

R2: *<sup>12</sup>Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup>Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

*...there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. <sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

We as churches are all parts of the same worldwide body of Jesus Christ. In an international conference a member of a well-off church in Western Europe asked an African guest about their daily life. He responded, "Well, in our neighbourhood, parents ask their daughters to go into prostitution to contribute to the family income. That is just to give you an impression of the level of despair we are in."

*"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it."*

*"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had." (Acts 4, 32)*

We can show that all the churches of the world are one in heart and mind; no church claiming that their possessions are its own, but sharing what they have. We can show that inequality had been overcome within the worldwide Christian community. We can show that inequality is neither fate, nor God's will.

### **Third scripture reading (Isaiah 62)**

R3: <sup>8</sup> *The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm:  
"Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies,  
and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled;  
<sup>9</sup> but those who harvest it will eat it and praise the LORD,  
and those who gather the grapes will drink it in the courts of my sanctuary."*

The Lord created humankind on the Earth. They nourish themselves by the land on which they live. The land feeds the people. Equally throughout the whole world.

But human have created the cash crop system. Since decades countries have grown crops not to feed their own people but to pay back the interests of their debts. The money has been paid back long time ago, but because of the compound interest effect, there is still an unescapable obligation to pay.

Together we can unmake systems of injustice and make the prophecy of Isaiah come true.

### **Reflection**

(A guest or member of the congregation may be invited to reflect on the theme.)

## ♪ Follow justice and justice alone

(Theme song of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019)

Deuteronomy 16:20 (NIV)

Rahel Daulay, Indonesia

♩ = 40

Fol-low jus-tice and jus-tice a - lone, that you may live and pos-ses the land, fol-low  
jus-tice and jus-tice a - lone, so that you may live and pos-ses the land, Fol-low  
land, the Lord God is giv - ing you, the Lord God is giv-ing you. **rit.**

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 6/8. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = 40. The lyrics are written below the notes. The second staff has a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The third staff has a second ending bracket over the final two measures, which are marked with a 'rit.' (ritardando) instruction.

*Note:*

*The song can be repeated several times until the first ending. As a variation, the repetition can be modulated to one key higher. To describe how we are moving to follow justice, sing each repetition with more intensity. The song ends with the second ending.*

Music © 2017 Rahel Daulay Indonesia.

## Prayer of commitment to building a more just and equitable planet

R4: Jesus Christ prays for the unity of his disciples.  
The gift of his life is justice for the world.

R5: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to walk together in his path.

R4: Let us hear his calling.

**All: Holy Spirit, unite us in action.**

R5: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to keep our lives free from the love of money, and be content with what we have.

R4: Let us break the cycle of greed and live in simplicity.

**All: Holy Spirit, unite us in action.**

R5: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to proclaim release to captives and victims of all forms of violence.

R4: Let us help them to live in dignity.

**All: Holy Spirit, unite us in action.**

R5: As members of the body of Christ, we are called to proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

R4: Let us protect the life and beauty of God's creation.

**All: Holy Spirit, unite us in action.**

(Adapted from *Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019*)

## Prayer of intercession

R6: Oh Lord, our Father,  
you love all your children equally – just like a good parent does not love one of his or her children more than the others. But we see in our world that the life of your children does not have the same value. In some places no amount of money is too much to rescue the life of an old person who suffers from a very complicated disease. In others young children die because of a stupidly simple disease: the absence of bread, corn or rice. We pray: let us see progress in overcoming unacceptable inequalities in our world.

Oh Lord, our God,  
we pray for the conversion of your churches towards your kingdom of equal love. You have huge networks of servants at your hands – organised in churches and movements. Strengthen us to act with consciousness of your unlimited possibilities, instead of our limitations. Sharpen our voices to call governments into their responsibility for building a more equitable world.

**All: Oh Lord, our God,  
we thank you, that you always reach out to touch our hearts and souls, and inspire our minds. We pray for transformative faith and that you guide us towards a future world where the vulnerable are protected, and none go hungry;  
where the riches of creation are equitably shared, and everyone can enjoy them;  
where all nations live in harmony and mutual respect; and  
where peace is built with justice.  
Amen!**

## The Lord's Prayer

### Benediction

L: May God embrace you with love  
and make kindness flow out of you.  
May God ignite courage within you  
and transform you into agents of his justice and peace.  
May God grant you humility  
and give you perseverance to nurture unity.

**All: Amen!**

(Adapted from *Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019*)

♩ **Masithi**

S.C. Molefe: Xhosa, South Africa

*♩ = 126* *All*

*Leader* Ma - si - thi: A - men, si - ya - ku - du - mi - sa, Ma - si - thi: A - men, si - ya - ku - du - mi -  
 Sing a - men: A - men, we praise your name O Lord, Sing a - men: A - men, we praise your name O  
 Singt a - men! A - men! Wir prei - sen Gott, den Herrn! Singt a - men! A - men! Wir prei - sen Gott, den

sa, Ma - si - thi: A - men, Ba - wo, A - men, Ba - wo, A - men, si - ya - ku - du - mi - sa.  
 Lord, Sing a - men: A - men, we praise your name O Lord.  
 Herr! Singt A - men! A - men, a - men, a - men, a - men! A - men! Wir prei - sen Gott, den Herrn.

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