

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN
UNITY

and throughout the year

2024

You shall love the Lord your God ...
and your neighbour as yourself

(Luke 10:27)

FOREWORD

Word from Chairperson, International Ecumenical Movement -Kenya Chapter

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am delighted to welcome you to the ecumenical celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024. Each year the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity jointly assign a particular country to prepare material for WOPCU.

The materials for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). The theme chosen is “You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27). Brothers and sisters from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches, ecumenical bodies and the CCN in Burkina Faso collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections and experienced their work together as a real path of ecumenical conversion.

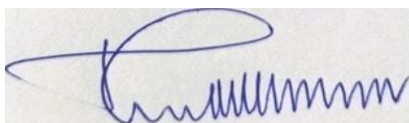
Our Ecumenical Prayer: “All Lord Jesus Christ, you call us together in faith and love. Breathe again the new life of your Holy Spirit among us that we may hear your holy word, pray in your name, seek unity among Christians (and harmony with all men and women) and live more fully the faith we profess”

The Theme, and our Ecumenical prayer, is a clarion call to all of us as Christians to continuously practice the Christian ethos, that’s character, credibility, moral values in all circumstances. May the spirit of the Lord guide us throughout the year to us into oneness.

It is my sincere hope that this booklet will encourage you to live and practice your Christianity and become the voice of reason, be the voice for the voiceless and all with humility. Even though today is a one-day event, the theme shall remain as our Christian compass through 2024.

Thank you for being part of our Ecumenical movement participant today and wish you God’s blessing through the Year as you too experience God’s endless LOVE.

With God’s richest blessings



Rev. Isaiah Obare.

IEM-Kenya chairperson

**TO THOSE ORGANISING 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 January 18-25. 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 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, which this year include a challenge, 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 around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2024

(Luke 10:25-37)

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher”, he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live”.

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So, likewise a Levite when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend’. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy”. Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise”.

New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE YEAR 2024

“You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27)

The materials for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). The theme chosen is “You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27). Brothers and sisters from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches, ecumenical bodies and the CCN in Burkina Faso collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections and experienced their work together as a real path of ecumenical conversion.

Loving God and neighbour in the midst of a security crisis

Burkina Faso is located in West Africa in the Sahel region, which includes the neighbouring countries of Mali and Niger. It covers 174,000km² and has 21 million inhabitants, of about 60 ethnicities. In religious terms, approximately 64 per cent of the population is Muslim, nine per cent adhere to traditional African religions and 26 per cent is Christian (20% Catholic, 6% Protestant). The three religious groups are in every region of the country, and in virtually every family.

Burkina Faso is currently experiencing a serious security crisis that affects all faith communities. After a major jihadist attack was mounted from outside the country in 2016, the security situation in Burkina Faso, and consequently its social cohesion, deteriorated dramatically. The country has endured a proliferation of terrorist attacks, lawlessness and human trafficking. This has left over 3,000 dead and almost two million internally displaced persons in the country. Thousands of schools, health centres and town halls have been closed, and much of the socio-economic and transport infrastructure has been destroyed. Attacks targeting specific ethnic groups exacerbate the risk of inter-communal conflicts. In the context of this dire security situation, social cohesion, peace and national unity are being undermined.

Christian churches have been expressly targeted by armed attacks. Priests, pastors and catechists have been killed during worship and the fate of others who were kidnapped remains unknown. At the time of writing, more than 22 per cent of the national territory is outside state control. Christians can no longer openly practice their faith in these areas. Because of terrorism, a majority of Christian churches in the north, east and north-west of the country have been closed. Public Christian worship no longer exists in many of these areas. Where worship is still possible with police protection, usually in large cities, it has been necessary to shorten services owing to security concerns.

It must be recognised that despite the efforts of both the state and religious communities, the country is becoming increasingly unstable as extremist groups become more widespread. Nevertheless, a degree of solidarity is emerging between the Christian, Muslim and traditional religions. Their leaders are working to find lasting solutions for peace, social cohesion and reconciliation. To this end, for instance, the Christian-Muslim Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burkina-Niger is making a major effort to support inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation.

Following the government's calls for prayers for peace, social cohesion and reconciliation, individual churches continue to organise daily prayers and fasting. Action by the various Catholic and Protestant churches has intensified to assist displaced persons. Reflection and awareness-raising meetings have been organised to promote better understanding of the situation and of the value of fraternity, and to develop strategies for a return to lasting peace. This hope is also reflected in the traditional *Mossi* proverb: "No matter the nature or duration of the fight, the moment of reconciliation will come."

The invitation to work together on the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 challenges the different churches in Burkina Faso to walk, pray and work together in mutual love during this difficult period for their country. The love of Christ that unites all Christians is stronger than their divisions and the Christians of Burkina Faso commit themselves to walking the path of love of God and love of neighbour. They are confident that God's love will overcome the violence that currently afflicts their country.

The Biblical Text

The centrality of love in Christian life

Love is the 'DNA' of Christian faith. God is Love and "the love of Christ has gathered us into one". We find our common identity in the experience of God's love (cf. Jn 3:16) and reveal that identity to the world by how we love one another (Jn 13:35). In the passage selected for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 (Lk 10:25-37), Jesus reaffirmed the traditional Jewish teaching from Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might"; and Leviticus 19:18b, "you shall love your neighbour as yourself".

The lawyer in the Gospel passage immediately asks Jesus, "and who is my neighbour?" The question of how far the biblical obligation to love should reach was a disputed one among doctors of the law. Traditionally, this obligation was believed to extend to fellow Israelites and resident aliens. Later, with the impact of invasions by foreign powers, the commandment came to be understood as not applying to foreigners from occupying forces. In time, as Judaism itself fragmented, it was sometimes understood to apply only to one's own particular faction. The question asked of Jesus by the lawyer is therefore a provocative one. Jesus responds to the question with a parable illustrating love extending far beyond the limits expected by the lawyer.

Many early Christian writers such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom and Augustine saw the trajectory of God's plan for the salvation of the world in this parable. They saw the man coming down from Jerusalem as an image of Adam – that is, all humanity – coming down from paradise to this world, with all its dangers and brokenness, and the robbers as an image of the hostile earthly powers that assail us. They saw Christ himself as the one who, moved by compassion, came to the aid of the half-dead man, treated his wounds and brought him to the safety of an inn, which they saw as an image of the Church. The Samaritan's promise to return was seen as foreshadowing the Lord's promise to come again.

Christians are called to act like Christ in loving like the Good Samaritan, showing mercy and compassion to those in need, regardless of their religious, ethnic or social identity. It is not shared identities that should prompt us to come to the aid of the other, but love of our 'neighbour'. However, the vision of love of neighbour that Jesus puts before us is under strain in the world today. Wars in many regions, imbalances in international relations and inequalities

generated by structural adjustments imposed by western powers or other external agencies all inhibit our capacity to love like Christ. It is by learning to love one another regardless of our differences that Christians can become neighbours like the Samaritan in the Gospel.

The Way of Ecumenism

Jesus prayed that his followers would all be one (cf. Jn 17:21), and so Christians cannot lose hope or stop praying and working for unity. They are united by their love of God in Christ and by the experience of knowing God's love for them. They recognise this faith experience in one another when they pray, worship and serve God together. However, in inter-church relations, including in Burkina Faso, this remains a challenge. Lack of mutual knowledge between churches and suspicion of one another can weaken commitment to the way of ecumenism. Some can be anxious that ecumenism may lead to a loss of denominational identity and prevent church 'growth'. Such rivalry between churches is counter to the prayer of Jesus. Like the priest and the Levite in the Gospel passage, Christians often miss the opportunity to connect with brothers and sisters because of fear. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we ask the Lord to come to our assistance, to tend to our wounds and so enable us to walk the way of ecumenism with confidence and hope.

Christian unity in the service of wider peace and reconciliation

The specific context of Burkina Faso reflects the need to place love at the centre of the quest for peace and reconciliation. This search has often been undermined by the loss of values and of a shared sense of humanity and by a diminished concern for the common good, probity, integrity and patriotism. The search for reconciliation has also been weakened by spiritual impoverishment and by the pursuit of easy gains. Faced with these realities, the imperative to witness to the love of God is all the more pressing.

Moving from division to unity in Burkina Faso

Christian communities in Burkina Faso try to live the call to love through mutual hospitality. This is particularly evident during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. They have committed both human and financial resources to translating the ecumenical French text of the Bible (Traduction œcuménique de la Bible) into local languages, thus helping to lead Christians to the 'inn' of the Word of God (cf. Lk 10:34). In addition, they visit each other's churches and share in worship. They also cooperate in the promotion of human fraternity, peace and security in Burkina Faso. They bring Christ to their brothers and sisters when they tend to the wounds of those who fall into the grip of poverty and hardship.

However, as an African proverb says, "The tree must not hide the forest". These positive ecumenical examples cannot disguise the fact that there remain many challenges to unity. Despite their efforts to be the neighbour of all who confess the Triune God, the churches of Burkina Faso struggle to truly love each other as Christ commands. They sometimes relate to each other like Samaritans and Jews, divided culturally and theologically and living in unfriendly or hostile relationships. Continued disunity disfigures them and they acknowledge the need for ecumenical conversion, so that they can pour the oil and wine of healing on each other's wounds.

The inn in the parable of the Good Samaritan was frequently interpreted by Church Fathers as an image of the Church. Just as the Samaritan brought the wounded man to the inn, so Christ

entrusts the world's wounded and needy to our churches, to tend their brokenness and help restore them to health. This mission in service of the world is also the pathway towards the unity, which is God's gift for God's people.

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Instructions for those preparing the worship

This year the ecumenical celebration was prepared by a team representing different Christian traditions in Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN).

The choice of biblical and liturgical texts is inspired by the image of the good Samaritan from the parable (Lk 10:25-37) in which Jesus demonstrates what it means to love one's neighbour, in answer to a question about the Old Testament commandment: "You will love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself" (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18b).

In preparation for the celebration of the worship, several objects are needed. For the gathering action, sharing God's Love, a calabash or container filled with water is required. The worship begins with liturgical assistants processing with the calabash or another suitable container to the front of the sanctuary as the reader invites the community to gather. A member of the host community offers water from the calabash to representatives of the other communities present to drink. Alternatively, this action can take place at the entrance of the church. When this ritual of welcome has been completed, the worship leaders and the representatives of the communities present join in the procession, while a hymn is sung or music is played.

If Christians from West Africa participate in the celebration, it would be desirable to invite them to sing some hymns in their own language during the worship. In addition, bouquets of differently coloured flowers can be brought forward by representatives of the various churches present – to illustrate the richness of God's love and the diversity of God's people.

The texts assigned to the leader (**L**) may be divided between the various clergy or representatives from the different traditions present. Likewise, texts assigned to a reader (**R**) may be distributed among several persons.

At the end of the celebration, the calabash or container of water is brought forward and held up before the congregation, as the leader pronounces the dismissal. The sending and the blessing may be proclaimed jointly by minister/representatives of the different communities present.

Order of Worship

L Leader -

R Reader

A Assembly

(While All Ordained Ministers -vested in their attire of service process to the altar)

Entrance Hymn - Church Choir

Gathering and Sharing God's Love

R . (choose a representative of one of the Churches)

In Burkina Faso, a calabash is used to share water with guests who arrive tired from their journey. It expresses welcome, hospitality and fellowship. After the visitor has been refreshed, conversation can begin and the purpose of the visit can be expressed.

As we gather and enter into prayer, we welcome you in the same way as Abraham welcomed the three visitors and provided water for their refreshment. We invite you to be refreshed by sharing the water from this calabash.

NB: Water from the calabash is shared by a member of the host community with representatives of the other churches present. As the calabash is being returned to the front of the sanctuary, worship leaders join in the procession while a hymn is sung or music is played.

Word of Welcome: by the Host

Gathering Song: The Church's One Foundation (Samuel J Stone 1866)

1 The Church's one foundation

Is Jesus her Lord

She is His new creation

By water and the Word.

From heaven He came and sought her

To be His holy bride

With His own blood He bought her

And for her life He died

3 The Church shall never perish!

Her dear Lord to defend,

To guide sustain and cherish

Is with her to the end

Though there be those who hate her

And false sons in her pale

Against both foe or traitor

She ever shall prevail

2 She is from every nation

Yet one o'er all the earth

Her charter of salvation

One Lord, one faith, one birth

One holy name she blesses

Partakes one holy food

And to one hope she presses

With every grace endued.

4. Though with a scornful wonder

Men see her sore oppressed

By schisms rent asunder

By heresies distressed

Yet saints their watch are keeping

Their cry goes up, "How Long?"

And soon the night of weeping

Shall be the morn of song!

Invitation to Pray

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

A Amen.

L We are gathered as brothers and sisters to pray for the visible unity of Christians. At the heart of our worship is the story of the Good Samaritan where we hear the divine call to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Let us prepare to meet the God of Love in thanksgiving and joy, remembering his command to love.

A Glory to you, Father, for you reveal yourself in your creation and call all people to live in your presence.

Glory to you, Christ Jesus, for you give yourself entirely to each one of us and invite us to do the same.

Glory to you, Holy Spirit, for you gather us together in love and unity. Glory to you, God of Love, in whom we are created, redeemed and made one. Amen.

Hymn: **To the Living God (Charles Wesley)** OR any other appropriate hymn

1 Love divine all loves excelling	3 Come Almighty to deliver
Joy of heav'n to the earth come down	let us all Thy life receive
Fix in us Thy faithful mercies crown!	suddenly return and never
All Thy faithful mercies crown!	Nevermore Thy temples leave
Jesus thou art all compassion	Thee we would be always blessing
Pure unbound love Thou art	serve Thee as Thy hosts above
Visit us with Thy salvation	pray and praise Thee without ceasing
Enter every trembling heart	glory in Thy perfect love

2 Breathe O breathe Thy loving spirit	4 Finish then Thy new creation
into every troubled breast	pure and spotless let us be
Let us all in Thee inherit	let us see Thy great salvation
Let us find the promised rest	perfectly restored in Thee
Take away our love of sinning	Changed from glory into glory
Alpha and Omega be	till in heav'n we take our place
End of faith as its beginning	till we cast our crowns before Thee
Set our hearts at liberty	lost in wonder love and praise

Litany of Praise and Thanksgiving

R: (choose a representative of one of the Churches)

Let us turn our hearts to God in praise:

Praise to you Lord for you have poured out your love into our hearts so that we never lose hope. You free our lives from fear because of your love, and dress our wounded and injured hearts.

Praise to you for all the women and men who sow seeds of love and hope for their neighbours around the world.

A Lord, we praise you.

R : Roman Catholic Church :Eternal God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus your Son, the Redeemer of all people. Thanks be to you for the grace of conversion and all the seeds of faith, hope and charity among your people and everywhere. Thanks be to you for the faith we received from the apostles, for Jesus' prayer for unity, and for the gift of the Good News of salvation.

A Lord, we thank you.

L God of love, we adore you for the generosity of your love for all people – a love so perfect, it is beyond our understanding; a love in which there is no distinction on grounds of race, gender or social status. We adore you, who out of love sent your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world and continue to fill our lives with your love through the Holy Spirit.

A Lord, we adore you.

Prayers of Confession

L We come before you now, O God, to confess our sins:

R: (choose a representative of one of the Churches)

By seeking happiness without God and ignoring the command to love, we have turned away from God and from our neighbour. Our selfishness and our desire to possess and control separate us from God.

Silence

R: Merciful God:

A Forgive and heal us.

R: When we accept ideologies that demean the humanity of others, we build walls of division, sow the seeds of hatred and violence and abandon the Lord's command to love one another.

Silence

R: Merciful God:

A: Forgive and heal us.

R: We have hardened our hearts and deceived ourselves. In our lack of compassion, we no longer see Jesus in those who are different from ourselves.

Silence

R: Merciful God:

A: Forgive and heal us.

R: We fail to open our hearts and minds to the infinite and unconditional nature of God’s love for all. By being closed to this love, the world is darkened by selfishness, violence, indifference and absence of meaning.

Silence

R: Merciful God:

A: Forgive and heal us.

L: God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom you sent in the fullness of time to redeem all creation, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us by your Holy Spirit.

A: Glory to God, whom we praise with one voice.

Trisagion¹

A Holy God!

Holy Strong!

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

Old Testament Reading Genesis 18:1-8

(choose a representative of one of the Churches)

R The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on –since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

¹ ‘Thrice holy’ – one of the most ancient of Christian prayers. It is sung frequently in the worship of churches of both the East and the West. Some traditions hold that it was first exclaimed by Nicodemus as he removed the body of Jesus from the Cross

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 138 (

choose a representative of one of the Churches)

R: I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down towards your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

A: **On the day I called, you answered me.**

R: On the day I called, you answered me; you increased my strength of soul.
All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

A.: **On the day I called, you answered me.**

R: They shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

A: **On the day I called, you answered me.**

R: Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever.

Do not forsake the work of your hands.

A: **On the day I called, you answered me.**

R: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

A: **As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

Gospel Reading Luke 10:25-37

(choose a representative of one of the Churches)

R A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher", he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live".

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend'. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy". Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise".

Hymn: They'll Know We are Christians by our Love (by Peter Scholtes)

1 We are one in the Spirit	2 We will walk with each other
We are one in the Lord	We will walk hand in hand
We are one in the spirit	We will walk with each other
we are one in the Lord	We will walk hand in hand
And we pray that all unity	And together we'll spread the news
May one day be one	That God is in our Land

Chorus

And they'll know we are Christians

By our love, by our love

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

3 We will work with each other	4 All praise to the father
We will work side by side	from who all things come

We will work with each other And all praise Christ Jesus
We will work side by side His only son
And we'll guard each one's dignity And all praise to the spirit
And save each one's pride Who makes us one

Chorus

And they'll know we are Christians

By our love, by our love

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

Sermon / Homily

(choose a representative of one of the Churches)

Followed by a moment of silence or a hymn.

Calabash be filled with water and all member churches and partners will hand over the calabash to each other as a symbol of Ecumenical unity in Christ in front of the Assembly.

A: I commit myself to respond to the call according to Luke 10:27 " You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself."

Affirmation of Love inspired by 1 Cor 13

(choose a representative of one of the Churches)

Read antiphonally, with one half of the congregation reading the first part of each stanza and the other half reading the second.

- I I may speak in the languages of people and angels,
 but if I lack love, I am simply a resonant metal, a loud cymbal.
- II I may have the gift of prophecy, understanding of all mystery and all knowledge;
 I may have the fullest faith, that moves mountains; but if I lack love, I am nothing.

- I I may distribute all my goods to hungry people,
I may even deliver my body to the flames, but if I lack love, I gain nothing.
- II Love demands patience. Love serves. It does not walk away. It is not jealous.
It does not brag. It does not seek its own interest. It is not irritable. It does not hold a
grudge.
- I Love does not celebrate injustice, but finds its joy in the truth.
It excuses all. It believes all. It hopes for all. It endures all.
- II Love has no end. Prophecies? They will finish. Tongues? They will come to an end.
Knowledge? It will pass.
- A Faith, hope and love continue. The greatest of these is love.**

Hymn:

OFFERTORY

Prayer for Offertory: (choose a representative of one of the Churches)

Prayers of Intercession (choose a representative of one of the Churches))

- L:** We have been invited to live the divine call to love God and our neighbour as
ourselves. As we renew our commitment to this call, may this love strengthen our
unity as Christians.
- R:** With all our hearts, we desire to dwell in God's love and to have the grace to love our
neighbours as ourselves. God of boundless love, we pray that all people may come to
know your unlimited mercy and believe in your desire to fill us with your infinite
love.
- A: Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**
- R:** We join our prayers to that of Jesus, who prayed for the unity of all who follow him.
God of communion, we pray that we may work together for your greater glory and
spread the Good News of salvation for all.
- A: Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**
- R:** Our hearts are broken because of the confusion and division in our world.
God, our healer, we who are scattered like sheep without a shepherd, ask you to gather us
into one fold. Enliven us by your Spirit and send us again, two by two, to be the light of

the world and the salt of the earth.

R Our world is scarred by terror and violence. Millions are forced to leave their homes in search of refuge and safety. God of welcome, grant us the grace to risk embracing the stranger, tending their wounds and standing in solidarity with them. Strengthen our resolve to be kind and merciful and to act towards our sisters and brothers at all times as you do towards us.

A **Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**

R In our weakness and fear we know that we often pass by on the other side, turning away from those who need our help. God of power, despite our lack of charity, open our hearts to experience the length, width, height and depth of your love, so that we may love you more and love our neighbour as ourselves.

A **Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**

The Lord's Prayer

((choose a representative of one of the Churches))

L As children of the one God, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

A Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

A Lord Jesus, who prayed that all might be one, we pray to you for the unity of all Christians, according to your will, according to your means.

May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division, to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. Amen.

Vote of Thanks: Host Church

Sending Forth: All Ordained Ministers

The calabash or container of water is brought forward and held up before the congregation, as the leader says:

L Refreshed by the water of life, let us go forth to love God,
and to love our neighbour as ourselves, united in Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

A **Everything we can do together, let's do it! Amen!**

Recessional Hymn: Onward Christian Soldiers or any other

1 Onward Christian soldiers	2 At the sign of triumph
Marching as to war	satan's host doth flee
With the cross of Jesus	On then Christian soldiers
going on before	on to victory
Christ the royal Master	Hell's foundation quiver
Leads against the foe	At the shout of praise
Forward into battle	Brothers lift your voices
See his banner flow[Refrain.]	loud your anthems raise[Refrain]

Chorus

Onward Christian soldiers

Marching as to war

With the cross of Jesus

Going on before!

3 Like a mighty army	4 Onward then ye people
Moves the Church of God	join our happy throng
Brothers, we are treading	Blend with ours your voices
Where the saints have trod	in the triumph song
We are not divided	Blend with ours your voices
All one body we	in the triumph song

one in hope and doctrine
One in charity [Refrain]

Glory, laud and honor
Unto Christ the King
This thro' countless ages
Men and Angels sing [Refrain]

Chorus

**Onward Christian soldiers
Marching as to war
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before!**

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS
AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

DAY 1

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

“Teacher”, he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Lk 10:25)

Help us, Lord, to have a life turned towards you

Additional scripture passages

Romans 14:8-9

Psalm 103:13-18

Reflection

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” This crucial question asked of Jesus by a lawyer challenges every believer in God. It affects the meaning of our life on earth and for eternity. Elsewhere in the Bible, Jesus gives us the ultimate definition of eternal life: “... that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). Knowing God means discovering and doing his will in our lives. Every person wants a life of fullness and truth, and God desires this for us too (cf. Jn 10:10). Saint Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is a human being fully alive”.

The existential realities of life, with divisions, selfishness and suffering, often distance us from the quest for God. Jesus lived the mystery of intimate communion with the Father, who desires to fill all his children with the fullness of his eternal life. Jesus is “the Way” that leads us to the Father, our ultimate destiny.

Thus, our quest for eternal life brings us closer to Jesus, and in so doing brings us nearer to each other, strengthening our closeness on the path toward Christian unity. Let us be open to friendship and collaboration with Christians of all churches, praying for the day when we can all stand together at the Table of the Lord.

Prayer

God of life, You have created us to have life, and life in all its fullness.

May we recognise in our brothers and sisters their desire for eternal life. As we follow Jesus’ way with determination, may we lead others to you. We pray in his name. Amen.

DAY 2

The lawyer answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself”

(Lk 10:27)

Help me Lord to love you, my neighbour and myself with all that I am

Additional scripture passages

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Psalm 133

Reflection

The lawyer’s answer may seem simple, drawn from the well-known commandments of God. However, to love God in this way and our neighbour as ourselves can often be difficult.

God’s commandment to love him requires deep commitment and means abandoning ourselves entirely, offering our hearts and minds to serve God’s will. We can ask for the grace to follow Christ’s example, he who offered himself up completely and said, “Not my will but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). He also manifested his great love to all, including his enemies. We do not get to choose our neighbours. Loving them means being attentive to their needs, accepting their imperfections and encouraging their hopes and aspirations. The same attitude is needed on the path of Christian unity, with regard to one another’s different traditions.

The call to love your neighbour “as yourself” reminds us of the need to accept ourselves as we are, conscious of God’s compassionate gaze upon us, always ready to forgive. Consider that we are God’s beloved creation. Respect yourself. Seek peace with yourself. Similarly, we can each ask for the grace to love and accept our own church or community, with its failings, entrusting all things to the Father, who restores us through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Lord, give us the grace to know you more deeply, in order to love you with all of our being.

Grant us a pure heart, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

May the gift of your Holy Spirit

enable us to see your presence in our sisters and brothers,

that we may love each other with the same unconditional love with which you love us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DAY 3

“Who is my neighbour?” (Lk 10: 29)

Lord, open our hearts to those we do not see

Additional scripture passages

Romans 13:8-10

Psalm 119:57-63

Reflection

The teacher of the law wanted to justify himself, hoping that the neighbour he is called to love is his people and of his faith. This is a natural human instinct. When we invite people to our homes, they are quite often people who share our social status, our outlook on life and our values. The human instinct leads us to prefer familiar places. This is also true of our ecclesial communities. But Jesus takes the lawyer, and his wider audience, deeper into their own tradition by reminding them of the obligation to welcome and to love all, regardless of religion, culture or social status.

The Gospel teaches that loving those who are like ourselves is not extraordinary. Jesus steers us towards a radical vision of what it means to be human. The parable illustrates in a very visible way what Christ expects from us – to open wide our hearts and walk in his way, loving others as he loves us. In fact, Jesus answers the lawyer with another question: it is not “who is my neighbour”, but, “who proved to be a neighbour to the man in need?”

Our times of insecurity and fear confront us with a reality where distrust and uncertainty come to the forefront of relationships. This is the challenge of the parable today: to whom am I a neighbour?

Prayer

God of love,

Who write love in our hearts,

instil in us the courage to look beyond ourselves

and see the neighbour in those different from ourselves, that we may truly follow Jesus Christ,

our brother and our friend,

who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

DAY 4

When he saw him, he passed by on the other side (Lk 10:31)

May we never turn away from those in need

Additional scripture passages

Isaiah 58:6-9a

Psalms 34:15-22

Reflection

The priest and Levite who walk by on the other side may have had good religious reasons for not helping: they may have been ready to perform certain religious rituals and might have risked ritual defilement if the man had been dead. Yet on many occasions, Jesus is critical of religious leadership for placing the rules of religion ahead of the obligation to always do good.

The beginning of the text for the Week of Prayer tells us how the teacher of the law wanted to justify himself. The priest and the Levite in the parable would have felt justified in what they had done. As Christians, how far are we prepared to go beyond convention? Sometimes our ecclesial and culturally conditioned myopia can prevent us from seeing what is being revealed by the life and witness of sisters and brothers of other Christian traditions. When we open our eyes to see how God's love is revealed by our fellow Christians, we are drawn closer to them and so are drawn into deeper union with them.

This parable of Jesus not only challenges us to do good, but also to widen our vision. We do not only learn what is good and holy from those who share our confessional or religious worldview, but often from those different from us. The Good Samaritan is often the one we do not expect.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

As we journey with you towards unity, may our eyes not look away,

but be wide open to the world. As we travel through life,

may we stop and reach out, bind up the wounded and in so doing experience your presence in them: you who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

DAY 5

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them (Lk 10:34)

Lord, help us see the wounds and find hope

Additional scripture passages

Joel 2:23-27

Psalm 104:14-15, 27-30

Reflection

The Good Samaritan did what he could out of his own resources: he poured wine and oil and bandaged the man's wounds and put him on his own animal. He went further still by promising to pay for his care. When we see the world through the Samaritan's eyes, every situation can be an opportunity to help those in need. This is where love manifests itself. The example of the Good Samaritan motivates us to ask ourselves how to respond to our neighbour. He gave wine and oil, restoring the man and giving him hope. What can we give so that we can be a part of God's work of healing a broken world?

This brokenness shows itself in our world in insecurity, fear, distrust and division. Shamefully, these divisions also exist between Christians. Though we celebrate sacraments or other rituals of healing, reconciliation and consolation, often using oil and wine, we persist in divisions that wound the Body of Christ. The healing of our Christian divisions promotes the healing of the nations.

Prayer

Gracious God,

You who are the source of all love and goodness: enable us to see the needs of our neighbour.

Show us what we can do to bring about healing.

Change us, so that we can love all our brothers and sisters. Help us to overcome the obstacles of division,

that we might build a world of peace for the common good.

Thank you for renewing your Creation

and leading us to a future which is full of hope:

you who are Lord of all, yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

DAY 6

Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him (Lk 10:34)

Lord, turn our churches into ‘inns’, to welcome those in need

Additional scripture passages

Genesis 18:4-5

Psalm 5:11-12

Reflection

The man who fell into the hands of robbers was cared for by a Samaritan. The Samaritan saw beyond prejudice or bias. He saw someone in need and brought him to an inn. “The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend’”(Lk 10:35).

In any human society, hospitality and solidarity are essential. They require the welcoming of strangers, foreigners, migrants and homeless people. However, when faced with insecurity, suspicion and violence, we tend to mistrust our neighbours. Hospitality is an important witness to the Gospel, particularly in contexts of religious and cultural pluralism. Welcoming ‘the other’, and being welcomed in turn, is at the heart of ecumenical dialogue. Christians are challenged to turn our churches into inns where our neighbours can find Christ. Such hospitality is a sign of the love that our churches have for one another and for all.

When we, as followers of Christ, move beyond our confessional traditions and choose to practice ecumenical hospitality, we move from being strangers to being neighbours.

Prayer

Father of love,

In Jesus, you showed us the meaning of hospitality, by caring for our fragile humanity.

Help us to become a community

that welcomes those who feel abandoned and lost, building a house where all are welcome.

May we come closer to one another as we offer the world your unconditional love. This we pray in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DAY 7

Jesus said: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour?" (Lk 10:36)

Lord, show us how to respond to our neighbour

Additional scripture passages

Philippians 2:1-5

Psalm 10:17-18

Reflection

At the end of the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer: who was the neighbour to the man victimised? The lawyer replied, "the one who showed him mercy". He does not say "the Samaritan" and we might imagine that the hostility between Samaritans and Jews made that answer hard to admit. We often discover neighbours in the most unexpected people, even those whose very name or origins we find difficult to utter. In today's world, where polarized politics often sets those of different religious identities against one another, Jesus challenges us through this parable to see the importance of our vocation to cross borders and walls of separation.

As with the lawyer, we are challenged to reflect upon how we live our lives, not merely in terms of whether we do good or not, but whether, like the priest and the Levite, we are neglecting to act mercifully.

Prayer

Holy God,

your Son Jesus Christ came among us to show us the way of compassion.

Help us by your Spirit to follow his example, to serve the needs of all your children,

and so give united Christian witness to your ways of love and mercy. We pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

DAY 8

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37)

Lord, may our fellowship be a sign of your Kingdom

Additional scripture passages

Romans 12:9-13

Psalm 41:1-2

Reflection

Through these words – “Go and do likewise” – Jesus sends each of us, and each of our churches, to live out his commandment to love. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are sent out to be “other Christs”, reaching out to suffering humanity in compassion and mercy. Like the Good Samaritan towards the injured man, we can choose not to reject those who are different, but instead cultivate a culture of proximity and goodwill.

How does Jesus’ invitation to “Go and do likewise” speak to my life? What does this call of Christ imply for my relationships with members of other churches? How can we charitably bear witness together to God’s love? As ambassadors for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), we are called to be reconciled to God and to one another, for fellowship to take root and grow in our churches and in areas affected by inter-communal conflict, such as the Sahel region.

As mutual trust and confidence increase, we will become more willing to reveal our wounds, including ecclesial wounds, that Christ’s love may visit and heal us through each other’s love and care. Striving together for Christian unity helps rebuild relationships, so that violence can give way to solidarity and peace.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

we thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who makes us more open to each other, resolves conflict, and strengthens our bonds of communion.

May we grow in mutual affection

and in the desire to announce the Gospel message more faithfully, that the world may come together in unity

and welcome the Prince of Peace. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

Prayer for the Unity of Christians
as prayed by the Chemin Neuf Community

Inspired by a prayer of the Abbé Paul Couturier, Pioneer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Lord Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one, we pray to you for the unity of Christians, according to your will,

according to your means.

May your Spirit enable us

to experience the suffering caused by division, to see our sin, and to hope beyond all hope.

Amen.

APPENDIX 2

Office for the Unity of Christians
as prayed by the Chemin Neuf Community

The symbol of the empty chalice and paten

Every day, members of the Chemin Neuf Community pray, asking Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to “enable us to experience the suffering caused by separation”.

To illustrate and experience this, two people carry in procession an empty chalice and paten, and place them on the altar, symbolising our separation and the sin of division. At the same time, those praying ask “to hope beyond hope”, believing that one day we will all be gathered at the same table to break the bread together – to “do this in remembrance of me”, as Jesus said. (Lk 22:19)

The singing of Psalm 122

Typically, during this procession to the altar with the empty chalice and paten, the congregation sings Psalm 122, the words of which refer to a walk, a pilgrimage, up to Jerusalem, the holy city, with its promise of unity.

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”

Our feet are standing

within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem – built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up,

the tribes of the Lord,

as was decreed for Israel,

to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

For there the thrones for judgement were set up, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.”

For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, “Peace be within you”.

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

Typical Order of Service

Welcome and presentation

With an explanation of the empty chalice and paten, and the specific Prayer for the Unity of Christians.

Opening

O God, come to our aid.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father...

Psalm 122 (I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”)

Sung as a hymn, standing, with the procession of the empty chalice and paten to be placed on the altar.

Psalmody

One or two psalms or hymns, sung while seated, with antiphons before and after each psalm.

Scripture reading

All sit during the biblical reading. The reading may be followed by a homily, a testimony, a presentation of about a church or of an ecumenical event, or a reading from a Christian writer.

Canticle of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79)

Sung, standing, with an antiphon before and after the canticle.

Intercessions

Including petitions (or thanksgivings or blessings) for our churches, their leaders or a particular Christian event.

Prayer for the Unity of Christians

See Appendix 2, above.

The Lord's Prayer Concluding prayer Conclusion

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

International Ecumenical Movement-Kenya Chapter (IEM-K)

This booklet has been compiled by the International Ecumenical Movement-Kenya Chapter (IEM-K) from the materials that came from the Committee mandated jointly by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The IEM-K is a voluntary member organisation at the service of ecumenism at the grassroots in Kenya. Its members hold fellowship meetings on the first Saturday of every month, two round-table meetings in a year to discuss topical and emerging issues, and a National Ecumenical Conference every three years.

The IEM-K partners with churches, organisations, and institutions committed to ecumenism in planning and execution of ecumenical endeavours in our context. It is always willing and ready to assist any church, organisation and institution with ecumenical education and development.

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