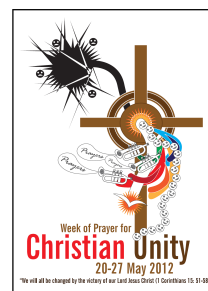


## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012

### ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

“We will all be changed – by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
(cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)



#### *Background to the Service*

The Ecumenical Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012 comes to us from Poland, where an ecumenical group has written a liturgy that draws on the experience of Polish Christians who have lived through times of joy and adversity. The history of Poland has been marked by a series of defeats, victories, invasions, partitions and oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are a feature of Polish history.

The service takes as its theme 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, which speaks of God's power in raising the Christ from the dead, and the transforming power of faith in the risen Lord. This faith is shown particularly in relation to our praying for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of God's people, we – and the traditions to which we belong – will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is an exciting vision, but the profound changes involved may fill us with some fear!

The unity for which we pray may require the renewal of forms of Church life with which we are familiar. Such unity is not merely a 'comfortable' notion of friendliness and cooperation. It requires a willingness to dispense with competition between us. We need to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts to and receive gifts from one another, so that we might truly enter into the new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

#### *Greeting of peace and sharing of the opłatek*

Poland has a particular custom of sharing a special wafer, the *opłatek* (plural: *opłatki*), in people's homes before the Christmas Eve meal, and also over Christmas in meetings in churches, and even at work. This custom is so precious to Poles, living at home and abroad, that it is practiced not only by people of different confessions, but also by non-believers. Each person is given a wafer. People then share this wafer by breaking off a piece of another person's *opłatek* and eating it. In doing so they convey their best wishes to each other.

This sharing of the *opłatek* expresses unity, love, and forgiveness between people to whom the Saviour came. Although it is not the Eucharist, nevertheless resembles it and symbolizes the presence of the one who was born in a 'house of bread' (Bethlehem) and who himself became the bread of life – Jesus Christ.

If no *opłatek* or wafer is available, bread may be used.

## Order of Service in outline

### A: *Gathering*

According to local custom, there may be a processional hymn which is followed by an opening prayer and act of penitence.

### B: *The Word of God*

There are three readings from scripture, set out as First / New Testament / Gospel readings in accordance with liturgical usage. The readings should be read by Christians from different traditions.

The reading from 1 Corinthians 15 is essential to the theme of the service: a dialogue form for its reading is attached in an Appendix A.

The readings are followed by a sermon/homily or other exposition of them.

A confession of faith follows: possibilities are printed in Appendix B.

### C: *Prayers for Unity and Transformation*

The focus for the prayers of intercession is unity and the transformation of different situations.

### D. *The Greeting of Peace and sharing of the oplatek*

These prayers are followed by the greeting of peace, using the *oplatek*.

### E: *Sending out*

This contains a Prayer of Commitment based on the themes chosen for each of the eight days. The service concludes with a blessing which can be done according to local custom.

In the service,

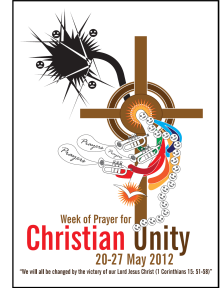
L = leader (more than one person could lead the various sections of the service)

R = reader (different people should take each reading)

C = congregation.

## Ecumenical Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012

“We will all be changed – by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
(cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)



### A. Gathering

*Hymn/song(s) are sung during a time of prelude or on the entry of those leading the service.*

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

C: **And also with you.**

*A short introduction may be given leading into the theme, in these or similar words:*

L: Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.

C: **Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

L: God in Christ is the Victor over death, sin and all evil.

Victory requires effort and struggle, using the strength given by the Holy Spirit. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the Church we – and the traditions to which we belong – will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. Christians want to make this effort together, without triumphalism, in humility, serving God and their neighbour according to the example of Jesus Christ. In striving for unity, this is the attitude we desire to ask of God together.

### *Opening prayer*

L: God of all goodness,  
Through Jesus you teach and show us  
that whoever wishes to be first  
must become the least, and the servant of all.

We enter into your presence,  
knowing that your victory is won  
through the powerlessness of the cross.

We come together to pray that your Church may be one,  
so that the world may believe.

Teach us to know and accept, in humility,  
that this unity is a gift of your Spirit.  
Through this gift, change and transform us,  
and make us more like your Son Jesus Christ.

C: **Amen.**

### *Prayers of repentance*

- L: Reconciling God,  
in spite of the unity you give us in Christ,  
we persist in our disunity.  
Have mercy on us!
- C: **Have mercy on us!** (*or 'Kyrie Eleison', sung or said*)
- L: We harden our hearts when we hear the Gospel.  
Have mercy on us!
- C: **Have mercy on us!**
- L: We fail to serve You in our brothers and sisters.  
Have mercy on us!
- C: **Have mercy on us!**
- L: The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought suffering and death,  
and creation was wounded and torn apart.  
Have mercy on us!
- C: **Have mercy on us!**

### *A moment of silence is kept.*

- L: May God Almighty have mercy on us,  
forgive our sins, and lead us to eternal life.
- C: **Amen.**

## **B. The Word of God**

### **Scripture**

<i>First reading:</i>	Habakkuk 3.17-19
<i>New Testament reading:</i>	1 Corinthians 15.51-58
<i>Gospel reading:</i>	John 12.23-26

*Hymn/song(s) may be used before or between these readings,  
and before or after the sermon/homily.*

### **Sermon / homily**

*A moment of silence or instrumental music.*

### **Confession of Faith**

*An affirmation of the Christian faith (e.g. the Apostles' or Nicene-Constantinople Creeds, or scripture passages such as Philippians 2:5-11 – see Appendix A) is recited.*

### **Hymn/Song**

*during which the opłatki are brought to the front and placed on a central table.*

### C. Prayers for Unity and Transformation

- L: United in Christ who gives us the victory, let us pray to the Lord:  
For the Church, the Body of Christ,  
that we might truly live the unity we receive through the Holy Spirit:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For the leaders of our churches,  
that they may be faithful to the unity to which all Christians are called:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For the nations of the world,  
that they may live in peace with one another and promote justice for all:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For all people,  
that we may be good stewards of the earth:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For the people of our society,  
that we may be transformed to live as caring neighbours to each other:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For the sick and suffering,  
that they may be transformed by your healing presence:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For all families and households,  
that their struggles and joys may find their fulfilment in your love:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: For the dying,  
that they may be comforted by your presence, and raised to new life in Christ:  
God our strength,  
C: **Change us by your grace.**
- L: Risen Lord, Jesus Christ, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace.  
C: **Amen, Amen.**

#### *The Lord's Prayer*

- L: When the disciples asked Jesus, "How shall we pray?", he responded,  
"Pray in this way". Let us join together in the prayer which he gave us:

C: Our Father who art in heaven,  
       hallowed be thy name.  
 Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
       in earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us this day our daily bread.  
 And forgive us our trespasses  
       as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
 Lead us not into temptation,  
 And deliver us from evil.  
 For this is the kingdom, the power and the glory,  
       for ever and ever. Amen.

### D: The Greeting of Peace and sharing the *opłatek*

L Poland has a distinctive custom of sharing a special wafer, the *opłatek*, in people's homes, churches and work-places at Christmas time. Each person breaks off a piece of another person's *opłatek* and eats it. This sharing expresses the unity, love, and forgiveness which God gives in Christ.

We invite you to do the same as a sign of our peace and unity in Christ.

L: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

L: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

*Each person present is given an **opłatek** wafer. This is then shared by breaking off a piece of another person's **opłatek** and eating it.*

### E. Sending out

**Hymn/song** (*during which a collection may be taken up*)

#### **Prayer of commitment**

L: We remember what Paul the Apostle wrote to the Corinthian church:

*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.*

Praise to the Lord, who leads us into unity!

Heavenly Father, we dedicate ourselves this week  
 to pray for the deepening of our unity in Christ.

The Lord Jesus has overcome death, and called us into new life in the Spirit.

And so we pray:

L: Changed by God's steadfast love,

C: **Send us, and together we will go!**

- L: Changed by Christ, the servant of the Lord,  
 C: **Send us, and together we will go!**
- L: Changed by the Lord's victory over evil,  
 C: **Send us, and together we will go!**
- L: Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord -  
 C: **Send us, and together we will go!**
- L: United in the Spirit and the reign of Christ,  
 C: **Send us, and together we will go!**
- L: Changed through patient waiting for the Lord,  
 C: **Send us, and together we will go!**

### ***Blessing and dismissal***

*The blessing may be bestowed by several clergy in the form below.*

- L: The Lord be with you.  
 C: **And with your spirit.**
- L: The Lord bless you and keep you.  
 The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.  
 The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you,  
 and give you peace.  
 C: **Amen.**

*And/or*

- L: May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
 be upon you.  
 C: **Amen.**
- L: Go forth in the peace of Christ!  
 C: **Thanks be to God!**

*Closing hymn/song(s) and/or instrumental music.*

### **Acknowledgement**

This resource for Christian unity is based on the international material for the 2012 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which originated with the Churches in Poland and was agreed by the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity. It has been adapted for use in Australia by the Faith and Unity Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

This year the Graphic was prepared by Mingstudiosdesign.

For more information: ph. (02) 9299 2215 or visit [www.churchestogetherinprayer.org.au](http://www.churchestogetherinprayer.org.au)



**Appendix A: dialogue forms  
for the reading aloud of 1 Corinthians 15.51-58**

R1 = Reader 1

R2 = Reader 2

R1 & R2 = both reading together

**Bold text** signifies using a louder voice

*New Revised Standard Version:*

R1 & R2        Listen, I will tell you a mystery!

R1                We will not all die, but we will all be changed,  
                      in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

R2                For the trumpet will sound,  
                      and the dead will be raised imperishable,

R1 & R2        **and we will be changed.**

*(brief pause)*

R2                For this perishable body must put on the imperishable,  
                      and this mortal body must put on immortality.

R1                When this perishable body puts on the imperishable,  
                      and this mortal body puts on immortality,  
                      then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

R1 & R2        **‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’**

*(brief pause)*

R2                ‘Where, O death, is your victory?  
                      Where, O death, is your sting?’

R1                The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

R1 & R2        But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory  
                      through our Lord Jesus Christ.

R1 (*quietly*)    Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable,  
                      always excelling in the work of the Lord,

*(brief pause)*

R1 & R2        Hear the Word of the Lord.

Congregation: **Thanks be to God!**



*The Message*

R1 & R2      Let me tell you something wonderful,  
a mystery I'll probably never fully understand.

R1              We're not all going to die –  
but we are all going to be changed.

R2              You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and  
in the time that you look up and blink your eyes – it's over.

R1              On signal from that trumpet from heaven,  
the dead will be up and out of their graves,  
beyond the reach of death, never to die again.

R2              At the same moment and in the same way,

R1 & R2      **we'll all be changed.**

*(brief pause)*

R2              In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen:  
everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced  
by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal.  
Then the saying will come true:

R1 & R2      **Death swallowed by triumphant Life!**

*(brief pause)*

R1              Who got the last word, oh, Death?  
Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now?

R2              It was sin that made death so frightening, and law-code  
guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power.

R1              But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three –  
sin, guilt, death – are gone, the gift of our Master,  
Jesus Christ. Thank God!

R2              With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends,  
stand your ground. And don't hold back.

R1 (quietly)   Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident  
that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

*(brief pause)*

R1 & R2              Hear the Word of the Lord.

Congregation:   **Thanks be to God!**

## Appendix B: Affirmations of Christian Faith

### *The Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
from there he will come to judge  
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

### *The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit  
and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge  
the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father,  
who with the Father and the Son  
is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*An Affirmation of Christian Faith*

We believe in one God,  
who made and loves all that is.

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was born, lived, died and rose again,  
and is coming to call all to account.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
who calls, equips and sends out God's people,  
and brings all things to their true end.

L: This is our faith, the faith of the Church:  
We believe in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Philippians 2:5-11*

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death  
-- even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him,  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.