

# *Worship Services*

## *Executive committee World Council of Churches (WCC) February 2009*

### *Introduction*

The UN Year of Reconciliation in 2009 was observed at the last WCC executive committee meeting in February with a public hearing in the Ecumenical Centre and morning prayers in the chapel of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey.

When starting preparations for the public hearing and morning prayers, we looked at preparatory documents for the last CWME Conference in Athens in 2005 which had the theme “Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile”. In one of those documents we read:

“Four aspects of the reconciliation and healing process need special attention. They are: **truth, memory, justice, and forgiveness.**”

You will find here a series of four morning prayers focusing on these themes as the guiding principle for the WCC executive committee worship. The worship outlines are put together in such a way that they follow one another, as a connecting link they have a symbolic action using a simple flower pot. Please feel free to adapt the texts and the suggested songs according to your own context.

We hope that this sequence of worship outlines will inspire your congregation to engage actively in the UN campaign on reconciliation.

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#### **Symbolic action: the flower pot**

When discussing the theme of reconciliation we felt that we had to find a way to express in a symbolic way that reconciliation is not something which comes easily, but something which is costly and leaves scars. We chose the symbol of the flower pot as it is something which can be obtained easily and is not expensive. (We even recommend you buy a spare one to test smashing it beforehand so as to make sure that the pot doesn't break into hundreds and hundreds of pieces but only into a few!)

*Day 1 – “Reconciliation and ... TRUTH”: The flower pot will be destroyed.*

Establishing truth about the past is often difficult because abuses and atrocities have been shrouded in silence. Healing requires that the silence be broken and the truth be allowed to come to light.

*Day 2 - “Reconciliation and ... MEMORY”: The fragments of the flower pot memorize our brokenness.*

How will the past be remembered, how shall we speak of it? Memories are not just about the past. They are the basis for identity. How we remember the past is both the basis for how we will live and relate to one another in the present, and how we will envision the future.

*Day 3 - “Reconciliation and ... JUSTICE”: Assembling and start to restore the flower pot.*

There are three kinds of justice which are essential to the work of reconciliation. First, there is retributive justice, where wrongdoers are held accountable for their actions. Second, there is restorative justice, in which what has been wrongfully taken from victims is restored, either directly or in some symbolic way. And finally, there is structural justice, whereby the institutions of society are reformed to prevent instances of injustice from happening in the future.

*Day 4 - “Reconciliation and ... FORGIVENESS”: Something new can spring from the flower pot which shows the marks and scars of the process it has gone through.*

It is important to realize that forgiveness does not mean condoning past wrongdoing, or even foregoing punishment. Forgiveness acknowledges what has happened in the past, but seeks a different relationship both to the wrongdoer and to the deed, thus enabling us to have a different kind of future.