

## **Week of prayer for Christian unity 2005 Ecumenical worship service**

### **Introduction**

The theme of the worship is : **Christ, the one foundation of the church.**

The worship begins with the congregation giving thanks to Christ for his work of salvation.

The complete text of 1 Cor 3 is at the heart of the worship, though one of our two options for the liturgy of the word proposes that only verses 10-13 are to be read within that liturgy. The other readings can develop the theme of sturdiness and the quality of the building of the church upon Christ, the cornerstone and foundation of our unity.

*The penitential prayer and prayer of forgiveness* comes after the proclamation of the word of God. This allows it to be an essential element in the worship. Some congregations will prefer to leave it in its traditional place towards the beginning. It is intended that each community participating in the service examine its collective conscience before Christ (v. 4) the foundation of the one church. Expressions of penitence, symbols and testimonies will assist this process.

Do we proclaim the gospel together, recognizing and sharing the gifts which the Lord gives our churches (v. 5)? Do we accept the complementary role of our churches in certain local situations? Do we recognize the primacy of Christ, whose servants we are? Do we really labour together at God's work? (v.9)

The symbol proposed here is that of two wooden planks or beams, assembled midway through the service into a simple cross. It evokes not only the gates of hell destroyed by Christ by his resurrection but also the solid materials habitually used in the construction of a house. Once placed on the ground as a cross, other symbols - of penitence, or expressing our faith and our unequivocal belonging to Christ for the building up of the one church - could be set on top of it, such as candles/nightlights, germinating heads of corn, flowers, or children's drawings.

During the intercessions, inspired by 1 Cor 3 : 1-23, the congregation entrusts to Christ, the one mediator, the work of Christians and the diakonia of the churches throughout the world, beyond the domain of ecumenism.

## Order of Service

### I. Gathering

#### **Words of welcome**

Dear friends in Christ, as we gather together, we thank God for calling us to search for unity. We thank God for all who in different parts of the world desire, and pray for Christian unity. Within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity for the year 2005 we pray and meditate with the churches in Slovakia. God has blessed them with new opportunities to serve, reconcile and receive spiritual gifts. Inspired by their ministry, with Christians all over the world we reflect on the foundation of our common faith - Jesus Christ the Lord, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

As the service begins, two planks of wood will be carried to the altar/communion table. These wooden planks have rich, symbolic content. A common material for building houses, the wood represents the foundation on which the churches are invited to construct unity. During the worship, we shall assemble the two planks into the form of a cross, as a sign of our common foundation, Jesus Christ. The two planks also symbolize Christ's victory over death as he broke the gates of hell and announced life.

*(Processional music)*

#### **Greeting**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

#### **Introductory sentence**

No one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 3 : 11)

#### **Opening prayer**

Let us pray *(brief silence)*

Living God, we give thanks to you for your great works among us. We thank you especially for Jesus Christ who through his death on the cross has saved us. Keep us close to Jesus, seeking comfort and joy, healing and wisdom at the foot of his life-giving cross. With all the faithful, and all creation, we praise you; through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

*Amen*

*L1 and L2: First and Second Leaders.*

*C: Congregation*

After each verse - where "I" is Christ - the congregation praises the name of the Lord. The response to the Lord could be sung, formulated using the first person plural, "we" Alternatively, a simple spoken response could be used, as below. The litany might start with the words "Thus speaks the Lord Jesus".

### **Litany of thanksgiving**

- L1 Because I love you, O my people, I was born in Bethlehem.  
They called me Emmanuel, for I am God with you, for ever and ever.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L2 I went down into the Jordan where I was baptized in the water,  
as a sign of the baptism in the Spirit who would come that all flesh  
might be  
purified and renewed.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L1 I was led by the Spirit into the desert to confront the Tempter,  
to overcome him and to free you from his chains.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L2 I proclaimed the good news of the reign of the Father,  
a reign of justice and mercy, of love and truth, peace and joy.  
I accomplished the signs of the “new age”, my hands cured the sick,  
my presence brought peace.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L1 I brought you together, little flock, as a hen gathers her chicks,  
as the shepherd gathers his sheep.  
I wanted to take you on my shoulders and lead you into heaven.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L2 I broke bread and offered new wine to forge an alliance with you and to  
give you  
life in all its fullness. I prayed to the Father that my joy might be in you.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L2 I died on a cross of wood, for the forgiveness of sins and to bring back  
the scattered children of the Father, and I opened the gates of hell.  
On the third day I rose from the dead.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L1 From my place beside the Father, I pour down upon you my holy Spirit.  
He will remind you of all that I have taught you,  
He is the breath of life,  
He is light and consolation, the force of your witness and the inspiration  
of your prayer.
- C *We praise you Lord*
- L2 Listen to me O my people, for I am with you everyday until the end of  
time, that you may be *one* with me as I am *one* with my Father, that the  
world might believe.  
Listen to my voice, my people and follow me so that there is but one  
flock and one Shepherd.
- C *We praise you Lord.*

### **Congregational response:**

- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing! (*Eph 1*)
- Or Glory to God in the highest!
- Or To You be the glory
- Or another hymn of praise to Christ

## **II. The Word**

### **Prayer before readings**

May the pure light of divine knowledge shine in our hearts, O Lord, friend of all men and women. Open the windows of our minds to the meaning of your gospel message. Inspire in us the respect of your blessed commandments, so that, overcoming the desires of the flesh, we lead a life according to the spirit, directing all our intentions and acts that they may be pleasing to you. For you are the light of our souls and our bodies O Christ, and we glorify you together with your Eternal Father and your good and life-giving Holy Spirit, from now until eternity. Amen.

### **Readings (Set 1 or Set 2)**

**Set 1:** Gen 28: 10-17  
Psalm 118: 16-24  
1 Cor 3: 10-13a

**Set 2:** 1 Cor 3: 1-23  
Psalm 118: 16-24

### **Hymn**

**Gospel:** Mt 7: 24-27

**Sermon (or testimonies)** *We recommend a brief sermon/homily.*

**Hymn** (*offering can be taken up here*)

### **Confession and pardon**

*(background music)*

*Two people form a cross from the two planks of wood. They place the cross on the ground, in a visible place in the worship space.*

*Between each expression of repentance, members of the congregation can come forward to place upon the cross either a symbol of Christ as foundation of the church, a candle/nightlight, a flower or a stem of corn. This gesture expresses our desire for conversion and our renewed belonging in Christ for the construction of the one church.*

L1 Lord, you are peace and reconciliation!

L2 Forgive us Lord, for often choosing jealousy and animosity rather than confidence and respect between churches.  
*(silence and placing of a symbol on the cross)*

- L1 Lord, you give us an abundance of blessings in the unity of faith!
- L2 Forgive us Lord, for often choosing isolation and refusing to be a blessing for each other, between churches.  
*(silence and placing of a symbol on the cross)*
- L1 Lord, you have given joy to the afflicted, liberation to the captives, pardon to sinners!
- L2 Forgive us Lord, for having closed our hands and turned our faces away from those who need help.  
*(silence and placing of a symbol on the cross)*
- L1 Lord, you have gathered us together as a shepherd gathers his flock and then goes to seek the one sheep that is lost!
- L2 Forgive us Lord, for having often strayed far from you, and pushed you away, thus underlining our divisions.  
*(silence and placing of a symbol on the cross)*

*Examples of openness to ecumenism which have required a true personal or community conversion can be given here.*

### **Prayer for forgiveness**

L: Almighty Lord, no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid. That foundation is Jesus Christ. We admit that we have not been able to finish building on this foundation in such a way that we may become the dwelling place of God. We have sometimes even been the cause of its ruin. Even if our work should be lost, save us, Lord and give us a fresh chance to work for unity. Create in us an ardent longing for the unity of your church and enable us to work towards it. Amen.

### **Sharing of the Peace**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

*And also with you.*

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

### **Nicene Creed**

### **III. Prayers**

#### **Intercessions** *(two or more worship leaders)*

The apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians to encourage them. May we have the same hope as the Corinthian church as we pray for the church of God and for all people according to their needs.

Eternal God, we thank you for calling us by name. In you we live and move and grow. We pray for churches and Christians throughout the world. Remind

us of our common foundation in Christ . May we grow together in faith and in love, until we attain that unity which is your will.

*Build us together in Christ,  
Make us your dwelling place.*

Send down your Spirit so that we may know Jesus and bear witness to our life and unity in him. May we know the mind of Christ in order to speak God's wisdom everywhere. Strengthen us to work towards peace and reconciliation in church and society.

*Build us together in Christ,  
Make us your dwelling place.*

We pray for the churches in Slovakia and for all churches which are experiencing change – growth or struggle, reconciliation or conflict. Inspire and strengthen them in works of witness and service.

*Build us together in Christ,  
Make us your dwelling place.*

We pray for those who have no home, no land, no food, no work, no medicine, no peace. May we recognize and serve Christ in the suffering and the needy.

*Build us together in Christ,  
Make us your dwelling place.*

We thank you for all your gifts of creation. Teach us to share with others our time, our energy, our resources and our love. Make us sensitive and responsive to the wounds in the human family and creation. May we be faithful to our calling and live a long life on earth. May we give our whole life to Christ, for we belong to him and in him are united all things on earth and in heaven. Amen.

*(Local congregations are encouraged to add petitions according to their own context and experience.)*

**The Lord's Prayer** *(each in her or his own language)*

#### **IV. Benediction and Dismissal**

##### **Benediction** (Aaronic blessing)

The Lord bless you/us and keep you/us. The Lord make his face to shine upon you/us and be gracious to you/us. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you/us and give you/us peace. Amen.

##### **Dismissal**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*Thanks be to God!*

(Postlude)