

Resources for
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
and throughout the year

Has Christ been divided?
(1 Cor 1:1-17)

Jointly prepared and published by
The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
The Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

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IN MEMORIAM

PROF. RALPH DEL COLLE (1954–2012)

Professor Ralph Del Colle, a Roman Catholic systematic theologian, Associate Professor of Theology at Marquette University (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA), died on 29 July 2012. From 1998, he was a member of the Pentecostal/Catholic International Dialogue, and took part in the Informal Conversations with the Seventh-Day Adventists (2001-2002) as well as in the official delegation attending the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare in 1998. A dedicated spirit and a joyful approach always marked his contribution to the meetings of the dialogue. Professor Del Colle never turned away from any issue, and he combined a lively and perceptive sensitivity with a dedication to the service of the truth. Throughout his career, he generously offered his expertise in the firm conviction that unity is God's will and the irrevocable path for all Christians.

PROF. MARGARET O'GARA (1947–2012)

Dr Margaret O'Gara, Professor of Theology at the University of St Michael's College, Toronto, died on 16 August 2012 after two years of illness. A Roman Catholic who specialized in Church teaching authority and ecumenical dialogue, she was active in ecumenical work for over 35 years, and was appointed to numerous ecumenical dialogue commissions. Dr O'Gara served on the Disciples of Christ/Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue (1983), the US Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (1994), and the Evangelical/Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (2008). In addition, she also served for 18 years on the Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada (1976-1993) and for 12 years on the Lutheran/Roman Catholic International Commission for Unity (1995-2006). She also served as President of the Catholic Theological Society of America and of the North American Academy of Ecumenists.

With gratitude, the International Committee commends these great ecumenists to our heavenly Father's eternal love.

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TO THOSE ORGANIZING 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 18-25 January. 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 a 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 do 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 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 all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2014

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind — just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you — so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you should be in agreement and that there should be no divisions among you, but that you should be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, 'I belong to Paul', or 'I belong to Apollos', or 'I belong to Cephas', or 'I belong to Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2014

1. Canadians live in a country that is marked by diversity in language, culture, and even climate, and we also embody diversity in our expressions of Christian faith. Living with this diversity, but being faithful to Christ's desire for the unity of his disciples, has led us to a reflection on Paul's provocative question in 1 Corinthians: "Has Christ been Divided?" In faith we respond, "No!" yet our church communities continue to embody scandalous divisions. 1 Corinthians also points us to a way in which we can value and receive the gifts of others even now in the midst of our divisions, and that is an encouragement to us in our work for unity

2. Canada is known for its natural splendour: its mountains, forests, lakes and rivers, seas of wheat and three ocean shorelines. Our land stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the U.S. border to the north pole. This is a land rich in agriculture and natural resources. Canada is also a land of diverse peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis,¹ and many people who came to settle here from around the world. We have two official languages, French and English, yet many Canadians celebrate the cultural and linguistic heritage from their ancestral homelands. Our social and political divisions frequently hinge upon linguistic, cultural, and regional distinctions, yet we are learning to understand how these national identities contribute to a healthy Canadian diversity. Within this multicultural milieu, many Christians have brought their particular ways of worship and ministry. Paul's letter addresses us within our diversity and invites us to recognize that as church in our particular places we are not to be isolated or to act over against each other, but rather to recognize our interconnectedness with all who call on the name of the Lord.

3. In the Scripture passage chosen for our reflection this year, Paul begins his letters to the Corinthians with a powerful opening. Like an overture to an opera or the opening movement to a symphony, this passage touches on themes that certainly prepare us for what is to come in these letters. There are three movements in this text. All three lay a solid but challenging foundation for our reflections as Christians living and working together in churches and society today.

4. In the first movement (1:1-3), Paul, along with his fellow Christian Sosthenes – as a small but authentic community of two – addresses another larger and very active community, the Corinthian Christians. He addresses the Corinthians as the

¹ First Nations is a term used in Canada to acknowledge the presence of the indigenous peoples before the arrival of Europeans. The indigenous people in the Arctic call themselves Inuit. Métis is a term used to refer to people of both indigenous and French ancestry.

“Church of God,” not just as a local chapter, but as a full expression of the Church in their part of the world. Paul reminds them that they are a “called” people: “called to be saints,” not isolated and on their own, but “together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” This last expression could also be translated as “both in their place and in ours.” So, they are authentically God’s Church but very much connected to everyone else who calls on the Lord, both in their confession and their place. Then Paul, as in all his letters, extends his usual and powerful greeting of God’s grace and peace. In Paul’s language, “grace” indicates God’s goodness and gifts to us in Christ, and is meant to draw out our gratitude to God and our graciousness to others. His “peace” for us in all its fullness and mutuality is communion (*koinonia*) in God.

5. *Where do you see God’s grace and peace in your local church, in your larger community, and in your country? How can you move beyond a preoccupation with your immediate community and attend to the community of all Christians and the world?*

6. While Paul is about to call the Corinthian community to task, he begins the next movement in our text (1:4-9) by giving thanks for “the grace of God that has been given” to the Corinthians “in Christ Jesus.” This is not just a formality, but a genuine rejoicing in the gifts God has bestowed on this community. He proceeds to build them up: “For in every way you have been enriched in him..., so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.” They are assured that they will be strengthened to the end, and that “God is faithful.” God calls us into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of his Son with all its social and spiritual implications for our churches and peoples.

7. As Canadian Christians we are mindful that we have not always been ready to rejoice in the gifts of God present in other Christian communities. Reading Paul’s text in an ecumenical spirit, we become more conscious of being invited to rejoice sincerely in how God has blessed other Christians and other peoples. Those who first brought the Christian faith to Canada were often dismissive of the gifts and insights of the indigenous peoples, and failed to see the blessings God bestowed through them.

We have much to be grateful for in the diversity of peoples and expressions of faith in our country. Although our history has many examples of how we have not lived in mutual respect for and support of each other, we know that our country was built upon co-operation and seeking ways for peace at home and in the world. Our enjoyment of the blessings of the natural world as God-given gifts are too often taken for granted and we struggle to balance prosperity and the stewardship of these physical blessings. We struggle too to enact the values we all say we hold as Canadians. As Christians and as churches, we feel called to a receptive gratitude

towards the gifts of God in the other, and to embody thankfulness and caring for the whole country and the world.

8. What do you give thanks for in your church, in your community and in your country? How have you experienced the spiritual and/or material gifts of God among other Christians or others of your community?

9. In the third movement (1:10-17), Paul addresses hard words to the Corinthians because of the ways that they have distorted the Christian gospel and broken the unity of the community: “I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollos, I belong to Cephas.” Even those who claimed Christ as their leader were not applauded by Paul, for they used the name of Christ to separate themselves from others in the Christian community. We cannot invoke Christ’s name to build walls around us, because his name creates fellowship and unity, not divisions. “Has Christ been divided?” Paul does not object to forming communities around strong leadership, but the community is to find its fundamental identity in Christ: “Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” Chloe’s people have seen this development among them and have brought it to light.

10. Into this state of division comes Paul’s appeal to come together and “be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” He exhorts his readers and those in Corinth “to be in agreement.” Does Paul think they should all worship and do things in the same way? We think not. These verses are not a call to leave aside the leadership of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. Rooted in Christ, we are called to give thanks for the gifts of God that others outside our group bring to the common mission of the Church. Honouring the gifts of God in others draws us closer in faith and mission, and leads us towards that unity for which Christ prayed, with respect for authentic diversity in worship and life

11. Paul highlights two central elements of Christian discipleship in which we are fundamentally bound to Christ: baptism and the cross of Christ. We were not baptized into Paul and he was not crucified for us; our unity is in Christ and our life and salvation come from him. At the same time, we all participate in one group or another, and our local churches nurture us in faith and help us to walk as disciples of Jesus. The conclusion of the matter, both for Paul and for us, is not only our sense of belonging to a particular church. Rather, our purpose is the proclamation of the good news, the very gospel to which we have responded in faith and joy. Now we must share this message with the world. Paul’s conclusion challenges us to ask ourselves if we have good news in Christ for each other, or if we carry division even in the name of Christ, thus, in Paul’s words, emptying the Cross of its power

12. As Canadian Christians, we have a strong history of co-operation and mutual support. Our history includes examples of common efforts, shared ministries, and

even the union of several churches. Where organic unity of churches has not been possible, we have often achieved common agreements and shared ministries that witness to our growing unity in Christ. Our churches have acted together on issues related to poverty and social justice, and together many of our churches are beginning to take responsibility for our un-Christ-like attitudes towards indigenous peoples in our country. And yet, despite these encouraging movements towards the unity that Christ desires for us, we maintain the divisions and disunity that distort our proclamation of the gospel.

13. We also hear of Chloe's people. It is under Chloe's leadership that this group identifies and names the conflicts and divisions in the Corinthian church. We continue to need such witnesses, both women and men, from all of our churches, and their ministry of reconciliation and unity. Giving voice to such witness will draw us closer to realizing Paul's vision of a community having "the same purpose and mind in Christ."

14. How will you and your church discern the same purpose and mind in Christ with other churches? How will your appreciation and experience of the different approaches and forms of worship among the churches in your community or country bear fruit in efforts towards visible Christian unity? What common mission will you share with other Christians to help make the world a better place for others?

15. To conclude, when we consider the many blessings and gifts of God made manifest in our country and peoples, we begin to recognize that we must treat one another, and the very land from which we derive our living, with dignity and respect. This recognition has called us to confession and repentance, and to the seeking of new and sustainable ways of living on the earth. It has raised our consciousness about how God has blessed us all, and that no one group can decide how to use the country's resources without hearing and including the voices of our fellow Canadians.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2014

The initial work on the theme for this year's week of prayer material was prepared by a group of representatives from different parts of Canada, brought together at the invitation of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism.

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We are also grateful to Bishop Donald Bolen of Saskatoon for initiating the preparatory group, and to all those who assisted the work of the International Committee.

The texts proposed here were finalized during a meeting of the International Committee nominated by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council for Promoting of Christian Unity. The Committee met with the Canadian representatives in September 2012 at the Villa Saint Martin, a Jesuit retreat centre at Pierrefonds, on the northwest of the island of Montreal. We are particularly grateful to the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism and the Prairie Centre for Ecumenism for generously hosting the meeting, and for arranging a visit to the Oratoire Saint Joseph in Montreal. We also wish to express thanks to the Faculty of McGill University, Montreal, for organizing an ecumenical symposium during our stay in Canada.

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Introduction to the Worship Service

Has Christ been divided?

(1 Cor 1:1-17)

As we gather for worship during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we respond to God's call to us and we seek to be renewed and to build up our mutual relationship in Christ through song, word and gesture. This celebration may also serve as an invitation to explore or recall the eight days of reflection, which are linked textually to 1 Corinthians 1:1-17. We recognize Paul's provocative question: "Has Christ been divided?" as a joyful challenge to prayer and to self-examination as persons and as Christian communities. This biblical text and worship outline is an opportunity to consider that challenge anew in your context.

Here are some of the distinctive features of this year's service that may require some advance preparation:

The **Gathering of the community** includes an invitation to pray while turning to face different directions, in the tradition of some of the indigenous people of Canada. You will need to be aware of where the compass points lie for the worshipping congregation, so that they can turn clockwise as the prayer unfolds. They will need to return to the front of the worship space for the "upward" and "downward" directions, as noted. You may need to alter the prayers to reflect your own geographical context.

