

Order of Service

for an Ecumenical Act of Worship

International Liturgy



**“We will all be changed by the victory of
our Lord Jesus Christ”**

(1 Corinthians 15.51-58)

INTRODUCTION

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 the transformative power of faith in Christ, 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 the church we – and the traditions to which we belong – will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ.

The Church that is truly One will look very different to the traditions that are so familiar to us. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear! The unity for which we pray is not merely a “comfortable” notion of friendliness and co-operation. 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.



PREPARATION

- A service leader is necessary, denoted by L: in the text.
- A person to lead the Intercessions, denoted by I: in the text
- Three readers, R1, R2 and R3, for the Bible passages
- Young people to carry the food baskets
- C: denotes the congregational responses
- If a conversation or drama replaces the Homily then engage people beforehand.
- A table large enough to hold baskets with food items, but not giving the appearance of being a Communion Table.
- Baskets to hold the 'food items'.

The 'food items' can be opłatki (see explanation in Sign of Peace and the Sharing of the Food section of the liturgy) or, if these are unavailable or too expensive, then small bread items or buns, e.g. Hot Cross Buns, sufficient to give one each to the congregation.

OPENING

Hymn on entry or prelude

During this time, those taking main parts in the service can enter in a procession. The young people could bring the food in baskets in at this point and one of the readers might carry the Bible. The Bible should be placed on the Reading Stand and the food in the baskets on the small table.



Greeting

- 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. Or: And with your spirit.**

Introduction

After the greeting or presentation of those present, a short introduction may be given leading into the theme.

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 victory.

Victory, for us, requires effort and struggle. Let us remember that this victory is God's gift. 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 accept this gift, receiving this together, without triumphalism, in humility, serving God and their neighbour according to the example of Jesus Christ.

In seeking unity, this is the attitude we wish to ask of God.

Opening prayer

L: Almighty God,
Through Jesus you say to us
that whoever wishes to be first must become last and the servant of all.
We enter into your presence,
knowing that your victory is won through the powerlessness of the cross.
We come to pray that your Church may be one.
Teach us to accept humbly that this unity is your gift;
Through this gift, change and transform us
and make us more like your Son Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Prayer of repentance

L: Almighty God, in spite of the Unity given to us by Christ, we persist in our disunity. Have mercy on us!

C: **Have mercy on us! Or sing "Kyrie Eleison"**

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 to us, and creation was wounded and torn apart.
Have mercy on us!

C: Have mercy on us!

A MOMENT OF SILENCE IS KEPT

ALL: May God Almighty have mercy on us, forgive our sins,
and lead us to eternal life.
Amen

THE WORD OF GOD

R1: Habakkuk 3.17-19;

R2: 1 Corinthians 15.51-58;

R3: John 12.23-26

Hymn/Song

Conversation / Presentation / Homily / Drama

When the conversation closes, or the homily ends, a short period of silence is kept.

Confession of Faith

The Apostles' or Nicene-Constantinople is recited. Or:

L: To God who alone is worthy of faith, we call: Amen – We believe!

C: Amen – We believe!

L: In the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen – We believe!

L: In God the Father Almighty, Creator of all.

C: Amen – We believe!

L: In the Son of God, who became a man.

C: Amen – We believe!

L: In his teaching, death, resurrection and ascension.

C: Amen – We believe!

L: In the gift of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen – We believe!

- L: In Christ's coming again in glory.
 C: **Amen – We believe!**
 L: That his grace is stronger than sin.
 C: **Amen – We believe!**
 L: That love is more powerful than hatred and death.
 C: **Amen – We believe!**
 L: In the resurrection of the body and life without end in the kingdom.
 C: **Amen – We believe!**
 L: Triune God look upon the faith of your Church in its pilgrimage through all the world, and lead your children to see the brightness of your majesty face to face, the One God who lives and reigns forever and ever.
 C: **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

PRAYERS FOR UNITY AND TRANSFORMATION

- I: United in Christ who gives us the victory, let us pray:
 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.**
 I: For the leaders of our churches especially (name leaders of all the congregations in your CT group) that they may be faithful to the unity to which all Christians are called. God our strength:
 C: **Change us by your grace.**
 I: 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.**
 I: For all people, that we may be good stewards of the earth. God our strength:
 C: **Change us by your grace.**
 I: 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.**
 I: For the sick and suffering, that they may be transformed by your healing presence. God our strength:
 C: **Change us by your grace.**

I: 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.**

I: For the dying, that they may be comforted by your presence. God our strength:

C: **Change us by your grace.**

I: Lord, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace.

C: **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

I: When the disciples asked Jesus, "how shall we pray", he replied – "when you pray say..."

C: **Our Father...**

Sign of peace and the sharing of the food

L: Poland has a particular custom of sharing a special large wafer, the "opłatek", in people's homes and churches at Christmas. Each person is given one. People then share it by breaking off pieces and sharing and eating it. In doing so, they convey their best wishes to each other. This sharing expresses unity, love, and forgiveness. We invite you to do the same as a sign of peace and unity by sharing the food brought to you by our young people.

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

C: **And also with you. Or: And with your spirit.**

L: Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

Hymn

During this Hymn the young people bring the food to all the people present and then they share the food with each other.

CONCLUSION

Prayer of commitment

L: We remember what Paul the Apostle writes in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15, 57-58):
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! Father, we dedicate this

week to pray for the deepening of our unity in Christ. He has overcome death, and called us into new life in the Spirit. And so we pray:

L: Changed by Christ through serving –

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through patient waiting –

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through Suffering–

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through struggling–

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through peace-making –

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through God's loving –

C: **Send us out together!**

L: Changed through God's feeding –

C: **Send us out together!**

L: United in the reign of Christ –

C: **Send us out together!**

Blessing and sending forth

The blessing may be bestowed by several clergy as below, or in another form.

L: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you. Or: 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 His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

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 or postlude

A retiring collection may be taken for those in need in the wider community.