



Table of Contents for Christian Unity Presence

- [1. Opening page of Christian Unity Presence](#)
- [2. Ecumenical and Interfaith Glossary](#)
- [3. Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relations](#)
- [4. Churches in full communion with The United Methodist Church](#)
- [5. United Methodist Participation in Councils and Other Networks](#)
- [6. Marks of Churches Uniting in Christ Participation](#)
- [7. Ecumenical Prayer and Worship Guidelines](#)
- [8. Churches Uniting in Christ Communion Liturgy](#)
- [9. Types of Local Ecumenical and Interreligious Involvement](#)
- [10. Ecumenical and Interfaith Organizations in Indiana](#)
- [11. Plan now to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity coming in January](#)
- [12. Resources for Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Example Service](#)
- [13. Indiana Conference Christian Unity Team by Districts](#)

Christian Unity Presence

In John 17:20 Jesus prays: “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.”

Christian Unity and ecumenism are key to being United Methodist in Indiana

In The United Methodist Church episcopal leaders are called to lead the denomination in ecumenical and interreligious ministry. Paragraph 403.1e of The United Methodist Book of Discipline states that bishops lead through several important disciplines, one of which is “a passion for the unity of the church.” The paragraph clarifies: “The role of the bishop is to be the shepherd of the whole flock and thereby provide leadership toward the goal of understanding, reconciliation and unity within the Church – The United Methodist Church and the church universal.”

It is not exclusively the role of the bishop, however, to lead in ecumenical and interreligious witness. In our denomination it is the responsibility of every lay person, every clergy person, every group and agency to be in ministry, and one of the foundations of our ministerial witness is that of ecumenical and interreligious relationships.

Local Ecumenical and Interreligious Involvement

There are many different ways for leaders in The United Methodist Church to encourage ecumenical and Interreligious engagement. Locally, there are often several options. If none of the following exists, however, United Methodist clergy and laity are encouraged to start unity movements. Some ideas to consider include the following:

Church to Church Connection: Both laity and clergy can be intentionally involved in Christian unity and interreligious relationships in their contexts and neighborhoods. United Methodists can be catalysts for community mercy and justice ministries; shared worship services; joint Bible studies; visits to each other’s houses of worship; and disaster response ministries. A local pastor or lay leader can get started by simply reaching out to someone in another faith community and asking if they might study together or be in ministry together in some way needed in the area.

Local Conciliar Bodies: The United Methodist Church participates fully in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Many of these groups find expression within the areas of our annual conferences and districts. Pastors and lay people can look in their area for ministerial associations, ecumenical or interfaith covenant groups, study groups, councils of churches, and interfaith communities.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

In the Indiana Conference, we have a Christian Unity Team comprised of a Conference Coordinator of Christian Unity as well as ten District Coordinators of Christian Unity. They work with Bishop Trimble and the Conference Superintendents to assist districts and local churches in their ecumenical outreach to the communities in which they are present. The resources presented here hopefully will assist our pastors and congregations in reaching out in ecumenical ways in their communities.

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Ecumenical and Interfaith Glossary

Ecumenism - The word “ecumenism” is a noun derived from two Greek words, *oikoumene* (“the inhabited earth”) and *oikos* (“house”). Put together they could be understood as: “The people of the whole world who live within a common home.” When traced to the teachings and prayers of Christ, ecumenism can be used to describe the worldwide household of those who hold to one Christian faith. It has become a key word for the movement toward greater Christian understanding, appreciation and visible unity. In its modern usage, ecumenism has come to be associated with Christian Unity in general. The word “ecumenical” is an adjective used to describe this 20th century movement and its leadership.

Interreligious - There are several ways this word and the following word are currently used. For the WCC “interreligious” refers to actions between different Christian denominations, much like the word “ecumenical”. It has also been used to refer to holding formal dialogues. The United Methodist Council of Bishops ecumenical staff usually uses “interreligious” to describe interactions among religious institutions or religious organizations, the emphasis being on the institutional relationships among religions, such as Judaism, Buddhist, Christian and Hindu.

Multi-Religious – This term is used by some Christians to refer to religions working together. The Council of Bishops tends to use “Interreligious” instead of “multi-religious.”

Interfaith - For the World Council of Churches “interfaith” refers to interaction between different faith groups such as Muslim, Christian and Jew. It has also been used to refer to the working together of people of faith to combat social justice issues. The Council of Bishops ecumenical staff usually uses to “interfaith” to describe interactions among people of different religions, the emphasis being on the personal, spiritual relationships among human beings.

Intrafaith – Pay attention to the prefix. “Intra” means within, inside or on the inside. So, Intrafaith refers to members of one religion examining just itself in light of their own experiences.

Dialogue and Conversation - Dialogue literally means a word between two parties but is more broadly understood as a term for conversation or listening. Within the Ecumenical Movement it has come to be understood as a formal, official and ongoing conversation on particular issues of unity between or among denominations or groups of faith. A dialogue between two faith groups is called a bi-lateral dialogue. A dialogue among three or more faith groups is called a multi-lateral dialogue.

For more information, visit www.unitedmethodistbishops.org/ecumenical.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships

2016 *United Methodist Book of Resolutions*, #3291

The emergence of religiously diverse societies and the new dynamics in old religious communities prompt many faith communities to reconsider how they relate to one another and to prevailing secular ideologies representing a great opportunity

Called to Be Neighbors

The vision of a “worldwide community of communities” commends itself to many Christians as a way of being together with persons of different religious convictions in a pluralistic world. Ultimately, this is to shift the question from, “To which church do we belong?” to “Have we participated in promoting the work of the Holy Spirit?” That suggests that we United Methodist Christians, not just individually, but corporately, are called to be neighbors with other faith communities, and to work with them to create a human community, a set of relationships between people at once interdependent and free, in which there is love, mutual respect, and justice.

Called to Be Witnesses

Jesus issued his famous missionary mandate, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19) Thus, we are called to bridge geographic, sociological, racial, or cultural boundaries. We are to proclaim and witness to the God who has bound humanity together in care for one another, regardless of our differences.

As we reflect on our faith and in our witness to and encounter with our diverse neighbors, we rediscover that God is also Creator of all humankind, the “one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all” (Ephesians 4:6 GNT).

Dialogue: A Way to Be Neighbors

Dialogue is the intentional engagement with persons who hold other faith perspectives for purposes of mutual understanding, cooperation, and transformation. A positive foundation from which to connect with persons in other faith communities is recognition of the gifts they bring. Engaging in dialogue with positive expectation offers the sharing of mutually beneficial spiritual gifts and overcoming past hostilities. Each religious community’s faith offers a positive way to resolve conflict and offers resources for building community. Dialogue seeks to provide an environment allowing differences, affirms the positives, and brings a deeper relationship.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Dialogue: A Way to Witness

Dialogue can lead to a relationship of mutual acceptance, openness, and respect. True and effective dialogue requires Christians be truly open to persons of other faith communities about each other's convictions on life, truth, salvation and witness. Dialogue leads to the understanding and receiving of each other's wisdom. Dialogue creates relationships of mutual understanding, open-ness, and respect. We leave to the Holy Spirit the outcome of our mutual openness. A large part of our task, and foundational to interreligious dialogue and cooperation, is to learn to discern the Spirit's work.

We must be obedient to our own call to witness and be loving and neighborly to persons of other faith communities. In dialogue, these deeply held truths encounter each other in witness and love, so that greater wisdom and understanding of truth may emerge that benefits all parties.

Neighbors and Witnesses: Into the New Millennium

The command to love one's neighbors and the call to witness to Jesus Christ to all people are inseparably linked. The profound challenge this represents for United Methodist Christians can be seen most sharply in the many diverse religious movements and to the religious nones. The calling to be witnesses and neighbors to all people, is based on the biblical caution not to bear false witness (Matthew 19:18) and the admonition to live at peace with all people (Hebrews 12:14). Love of neighbor and witness to Christ are the two primary attitudes United Methodist Christians must affirm in their relationship with persons of other faiths and those without a religious tradition.

United Methodist Christians enter a new millennium full of challenges and opportunities. We seek to learn how the Holy Spirit works among all peoples of the world, especially among those in other religious traditions and to those without a religious tradition. These guidelines will assist United Methodists to be faithful to their call to witness and the call to be neighbors with persons of other faith communities.

1. Identify the various faith communities and familiarize your congregation with them.
2. Initiate dialogues with different faith communities, remaining sensitive to areas of historic tension. Be open to the possibilities for deepened understanding and new insight.
3. Work with persons of other faith communities to resolve economic, social, cultural and political problems in the community.
4. Plan community celebrations with an interreligious perspective together with persons of other faith traditions.
5. Develop new models of community building that strengthen relationships and allow people to dwell together in harmony while honoring the integrity of their differences.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Intent

The intent in developing interreligious relationships is not to amalgamate all faiths into one religion. In dialogue, we mutually seek insight into the wisdom of other traditions and we hope to overcome our fears and misapprehensions.

United Methodist Christians are neighbors with persons whose religious commitments are different from our own. We open our-selves to dialogue and engagement with persons of other faith communities and to other Christians whose understandings, cultures, and practices may be different from our own.

Therefore, The United Methodist Church, in the knowledge that Jesus calls us to the blessings of peacemaking and reminds us that the highest law is to love God and neighbor, calls its members and its leaders:

1. To oppose demagoguery, manipulation, and image making that seeks to label Arabs and Muslims in a negative way;
2. To counter stereotypical and bigoted statements made against Muslims and Islam, Arabs and Arabic culture;
3. To increase knowledge of neighbor by study and personal contact that yield a greater appreciation of the Muslim and Arabic contributions to society;
4. To act decisively to include Arabs and Muslims in interfaith and community organizations;
5. To pray for the perfection of community among us and to participate fully in the process of bringing it into being; and
6. To publicly denounce through statements from the Council of Bishops and the General Board of Church and Society current practices that discriminate against this community.

In order to aid United Methodists to respond to this call, all boards, agencies, and institutions of The United Methodist Church are requested to provide resources and programs and, where appropriate, to act in advocacy.

ADOPTED 1988

AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000, 2004

READOPTED 2008 AMENDED AND READOPTED 2016

RESOLUTION #3141, 2012 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION #3128, 2008 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION #78, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION #69, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

See Social Principles, ¶162B To purchase the Book of Resolutions, [click here](#).

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[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Churches in full communion with The United Methodist Church

Bodies established after a dialogue resulted in a relationship of full communion: • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America- UMC Coordinating Committee • Moravian Church in North America (Northern and Southern Synods) – UMC Coordinating Committee

- The Pan-Methodist Commission

Full Communion Partners

Official denomination-wide full communion partners are those who have completed dialogues approved by the Council of Bishops and ratified by the General Conference. The United Methodist Church has several full communion partners. We understand a formal full communion relationship as one that exists between two or more Christian churches that:

1. Recognize each other as constituent members of the one, holy catholic and apostolic church, the Body of Christ, as described in the Holy Scriptures, and confessed in the church's historic creeds.
2. Recognize the authenticity of each other's sacraments and welcome one another to partake in the Eucharist in each other's worship.
3. Affirm the authenticity of each church's Christian ministry; and
4. Recognize the validity each other's offices of ministry.

At the denominational level The United Methodist Church is in full communion relationship with several churches including:

- The African Methodist Episcopal Church
- The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- The African Union Methodist Protestant Church
- The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- The Moravian Church (Northern and Southern Provinces)
- The Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches
- The Uniting Church in Sweden

There are also full communion relationships on annual and central conference levels. The relationships among the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe is one example of these.

United Methodist Participation in Councils and Other Networks

The United Methodist Church officially participates in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Every time a meeting is held those United Methodists in attendance are representative of all United Methodists across the connection. Among the organizations in which The United Methodist Church participates are the following:

Churches Uniting in Christ www.churchesuniting.org/about-us

Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) is a multi-lateral dialogue among several Protestant Churches in the USA, who covenant together to work toward racial justice and hope eventually to achieve full communion. There are three representatives from each faith communion who sit on the Coordinating Council: the Delegate (who is usually the ESO), the Advisor (who is usually the EO), and a Young Adult Representative. CUIC sponsors a bi-annual gathering of Christians who study together a topic. The Council of Bishops sends an official delegation to this event.

Participating full member denominations of Churches Uniting in Christ include:

- [African Methodist Episcopal Church](#)
- [African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church](#)
- [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)
- [Christian Methodist Episcopal Church](#)
- [Episcopal Church \(United States\)](#)
- [International Council of Community Churches](#)
- [Moravian Church in North America](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [United Methodist Church](#)

Former partners in mission and dialogue

- [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

Pan-Methodist Commission

www.worldmethodistcouncil.org/the-pan-methodist-commission

The Pan-Methodist Commission is a multi-lateral full communion relationship among six Methodist denominations. It meets together to work on that relationship and its shared ministry once a year. It was designed to have nine representatives from each from each of its six member communions (The African Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, The African Union Methodist Protestant Church, The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church The Union American Episcopal Church and The United Methodist Church). That number is to be equally divided between Bishops, Clergy and Laity (3 each).

Christian Churches Together in the USA www.christianchurchestogether.org

Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT) is an ecumenical venture that focuses on relationship-building, faith sharing and understanding among its five family groups (Historically Black Churches, Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches, Mainline Protestant Churches, Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church) in the USA.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

It has an Executive Committee made up of representatives from each of the family groups. Additionally, CCT currently holds an annual forum, which focuses on an issue common to the members and is selected by the Executive Committee. The Council of Bishops sends an official delegation to this forum.

The World Council of Churches www.oikoumene.org

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is a global fellowship of approximately 352 member communions representing over 500 million Protestant and Orthodox Christians. The predecessor denominations of the United Methodist Church (The Evangelical United Brethren and The Methodist Church) were founding members and The UMC continues to actively participating today through its various educational, advocacy and theological ministry programs. The WCC holds a worldwide assembly approximately every seven years, and the Council of Bishops sends an official delegation to this forum. Bishop Sally Dyck and Rev. Ann currently serve on the Central Committee.

The World Methodist Council and Conference <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/> The World Methodist Council WMC is a fellowship of over 80 Methodist/Wesleyan/United Churches who share a connection to the theology and history of John Wesley. Governed by a diverse Steering Committee, the WMC engages in global dialogues, ecumenical formation, evangelism and networking. The Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, an office in Geneva, an office in North Carolina and the Old Rectory in London are all connected with the WMC, as are World Evangelism, Wesley Men and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. Bishop Rosemarie Wenner currently serves as the Geneva Office Secretary, and Rev. Matthew Laferty currently serves as the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome Executive Director. Bishop Debbie Wallace-Padgett, Mr. Amos Nascimento and Rev. Dr. Jean Hawxhurst currently serve on the Steering Committee.

These organizations are committed to leading efforts to advance effective multireligious cooperation for peace on global, regional, national and local levels while ensuring that the religious communities organized on these same levels assume and exercise appropriate leadership and ownership of these efforts. There are other expressions of interreligious engagement through our United Methodist boards and agencies.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Marks of Churches Uniting in Christ Participation

www.churchesuniting.org/about-us

After forty years of study and prayer through the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), the member churches agreed to stop "consulting" and start living their unity in Christ more fully. On January 20, 2002, these churches inaugurated a new relationship to be known as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC).

Each communion retains its own identity and decision-making structures, but they also have pledged before God to draw closer in sacred things -- including regular sharing of the Lord's Supper and common mission, especially a mission to combat racism together. Each church also committed itself to undertake an intensive dialogue toward the day when ministers are authorized to serve and lead worship, when invited, in each of the communions.

Churches Uniting in Christ is not a new structure. It is an officially recognized invitation to live with one another differently. Christians in the pews know that we belong together because we all belong to the same Lord. Churches Uniting in Christ is a framework for showing to the world what we truly are -- the one Body of Jesus Christ.

"Marks" of Churches Uniting In Christ Participation

Entering into Churches Uniting In Christ means that the participating churches will express their relationship with one another through the following visible marks:

1. Mutual recognition of each other as authentic expressions of the one church of Jesus Christ. Specifically, this means that the participating churches will publicly recognize the following in one another:

- * Faith in one God who through Word and in the Spirit creates, redeems and sanctifies; *
- Commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and as the incarnate and risen Lord, *
- Faithfulness to the Holy Scripture, which testifies to Tradition and to which Tradition testifies, as containing all things necessary for our salvation as well as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith;
- * Commitment to faithful participation in the two sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ, Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- * Commitment to the evangelical and prophetic mission of God and to God's reign of justice and peace;
- * Grateful acceptance of the ministry the Holy Spirit has manifestly given to the churches.

2. Mutual recognition of members in one Baptism. This also implies recognition of the ministry all believers share in the common priesthood and from which God calls those members who will be ordained.

3. Mutual recognition that each affirms the apostolic faith of Scripture and Tradition expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and that each seeks to give witness to the apostolic faith in its life and mission.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

4. Provision for celebration of the Eucharist together with intentional regularity. This recognizes that the sacrament is at the heart of the church's life. Shared celebration of the Lord's Supper is a sign of unity in Christ. As Christians gather in all their diversity at one Table of the Lord, they give evidence that their communion is with Christ, and that they are in communion with one another in Christ. When Christians are unable or unwilling to partake together of the one Eucharist, they witness against themselves and give a visible demonstration of the brokenness of Christ's body and the human community.

5. Engagement together in Christ's mission on a regular and intentional basis, especially a shared mission to combat racism. The church engages in Christ's mission through worship, proclamation of the gospel, evangelism, education and action that embodies God's justice, peace and love. The commitment made by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ includes all of these, so that hearts and minds may be changed. The participating churches will also recognize, however, a particular and emphatic call to "erase racism" by challenging the system of white privilege that has so distorted life in this society and in the churches themselves. Indeed, this call is a hallmark of the new relationship.

6. Intentional commitment to promote unity with wholeness and to oppose all marginalization and exclusion in church and society based on such things as race, age, gender, forms of disability, sexual orientation and class.

7. Appropriate structures of accountability and appropriate means for consultation and decision-making. While some provision must be made for affecting the marks of the new relationship and for holding the churches mutually accountable to the commitments they have made, the structures developed for these purposes should be flexible and adapted to local circumstances. Apart from ongoing structures, the members of Churches Uniting in Christ may want to assemble from time to time in order to consider pressing issues and to bear witness together on matters of common concern.

8. An ongoing process of theological dialogue. Such dialogue will specifically attempt to:

- * Clarify theological issues identified by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ in order to strengthen their shared witness to the apostolic faith;
- * Deepen the participating churches' understanding of racism in order to make an even more compelling case against it;
- * Provide a foundation for the mutual recognition and reconciliation of ordained ministry by the members of Churches Uniting in Christ by the year 2007.

Ecumenical Prayer and Worship Guidelines

When Christians of various traditions come together for worship there is often great confusion about how worship should be organized. Basically, there are three options. Each different tradition can take a turn in leading from their context and thus teaching the other Christians present about their style of worship. Alternately, an already-created litany from a known ecumenical organization can be used. Or third, a combined service, or ecumenical service, can be created. When the third option is chosen, and a group comes together to create something new, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Ecumenical worship is an opportunity to witness to the inclusive love and unity of God's Spirit. Make sure everyone is invited.
2. There should be representation from all traditions who will be involved in the planning of the service of worship. It is better to have clear communication from the start than to make assumptions. Plan a special meeting with all involved to design the worship experience.
3. An honest conversation about Holy Communion needs to happen. The Eucharist means different things to different traditions. Often sharing in Communion is not a possibility. However, the brokenness that remains can be highlighted with a careful explanation of why we cannot yet all partake together. Additionally, all persons can receive blessings from officiants. It is helpful for those not familiar with this practice to make this invitation orally and written with brief instructions.
4. When United Methodists participate in ecumenical worship it is essential they are first well-versed in their own tradition. The order of worship of a United Methodist service can be found in the front of *The United Methodist Hymnal*. It should be studied and understood.
5. A single, scriptural theme is recommended in order to hold all the parts of the worship service together.

Under Christian Unity on this website, one will find example liturgies from: Churches Uniting in Christ and The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. These may serve as helpful templates in planning ecumenical worship services.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Churches Uniting in Christ Communion Liturgy

(This liturgy for the ten churches engaged in Churches Uniting in Christ* has been revised for local and regional worship services.)

Processional Hymn of Praise

Declaration of Purpose

Leader: We gather to praise God who in Christ Jesus chose us before the world was founded. We gather because God has dedicated us to be without blemish and full of love.

People: We come to ask God's Holy Spirit to be with us as we seek forgiveness for the sin of division. We come to pray for the full, visible unity of the one Body of Christ.

Leader: Led by the Holy Spirit, we have become Churches Uniting in Christ. In this relationship with one another, we can speak the Christian faith more clearly. With fresh courage, we can oppose the powers that divide our churches and oppress the people of our land.

People: We ask for wisdom and perseverance as we work to reconcile our separated ministries so that they will be united as one ministry of Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Let us confess our sins before God and one another: Holy God, we have promised to love you with heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

People: We confess to you and to each other that we break the promises and violate this covenant of love. We confess that we are diminished by pride and separation. We acknowledge the sinful divisions of our churches. We admit our failures in our mission of justice and love. We confess that we support systems of racism and other oppression that despoil your incarnate image and violate creation. Merciful God, forgive us. In Jesus Christ, transform our hearts to obey your commandments, restore our love for one another, and proclaim your glory. Ever living God, our Judge and Healer, have mercy on us. Lord, Have Mercy.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Leader: Everyone who is in Christ has become a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come. God through Christ, has reconciled the world and gives us the ministry of reconciliation. Friends, believe the Good News that comes from God: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

People: Thanks be to God. Amen

Liturgy of the Word Prayer for the Day

Leader: Eternal God: Proclaim your word in the reading of scripture. Speak to us in the meditations of our hearts. Reveal yourself in the faithfulness of our lives. Through Jesus Christ we pray.

All: Amen.

First reading from the Bible

Reader's Introduction: The Word of God from . .

Reader's Conclusion: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People's Response: Thanks be to God.

Psalm Second Reading from the Bible

Reader's Introduction: The Word of God from . . .

Reader's Conclusion: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People's Response: Thanks be to God.

Hymn

A Reading from the Gospel

All stand if able.

Reader's Introduction: The Word of God from . . .

Reader's Conclusion: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People's Response: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

Affirmation of Faith: The Nicene 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: by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made 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. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

(Prayer is offered with intercession for: the Universal Church, its members, and its mission; the Nation and all in authority; the welfare of the local community; those who suffer and those in any trouble; the departed, with commemoration of a saint when appropriate).

Leader: Holy God, the earth you created in beauty now languishes in pain, waiting for its redemption. The peoples of the earth whom you created, to live together in peace and joy, now experience violence and despair. Transform us and our Churches Uniting in Christ that we may become your ministers to this world and its people.

People: Make us bold in our struggle against cruelty. Give us courage and endurance to accept no peace where there is oppression, and to work for justice, God's Shalom, and the common good. Help us speak to the conscience of our country and its institutions. Use us to heal the brokenness in life. Renew our joy so that all creation can sing again the glad songs with which the world began.

Leader: All this we pray through Jesus Christ through whom you make all things new.

People: Amen.

Hymn

Peace (The people exchange signs of Christ's peace.)

Liturgy of the Table

Offering and Preparation of the Table

Leader: My sisters and brothers, we have confessed the gospel of Christ and the new life that God has lavished upon us. Let us now glorify God with gifts that we share with one another and with the whole world.

(Gifts are brought forward to the table to be prepared for the Eucharistic Meal.)

Anthem (if appropriate)

Great Thanksgiving Prayer

Leader: God be with you,

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to God,

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Leader: Let us give thanks to God most high.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise,

Leader: All praise to you, God our Creator, for by your Word and Spirit you made the heavens and the earth, filled them with life and declared everything good. All praise to you, God our Redeemer, for sending prophets, apostles, teachers, and martyrs, inspired by your Spirit to speak the word of life, and when the time was right, for becoming fully human in Jesus Christ. All praise to you, God our Helper; as wisdom, you inspire us to speak the truth; as power, you strengthen us to do justice. With your sons and daughters of faith, in all times and places, and with all the heavenly host, we praise you with joy.

All: Holy, holy, holy God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God. Hosanna in the highest!

Leader: Loving God, in gratitude we remember that on the night before the crucifixion, Jesus took bread and after giving thanks to you broke it and gave it to the disciples, saying: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way after supper Jesus took the cup and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." In gratitude for what Christ has done for us, we proclaim our hope.

All: Dying you destroyed our death; rising you restored our life; Jesus, come in glory.

Leader: Holy God, send your Holy Spirit upon us and these gifts, that all who eat and drink at this table may be one body and one people, a living sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Through this meal unite us with the risen Christ so that we may give ourselves for the life of the world. Through us bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Give us the power to work for justice that all the world may be filled with peace and joy. This sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we offer you, eternal God, through Jesus Christ, in unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Leader: With the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

All: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Breaking the Bread

Leader: The bread we break is the communion of the Body of Christ.

All: We who are many are one Body for we all share in the one bread.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Leader: The cup of blessing for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

All: We who are many are one Body for we all share in the one cup.

Communion of the People (As the people receive Communion, hymns may be sung.)

Prayer after Communion

All: God of glory, you nourish us with bread from heaven. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, that through us your light may shine into all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Commission and the Blessing

Leader: Let us go from this place in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

All: Amen.

Leader: May God bless us with strength to seek justice.

All: Amen

Leader: May God bless us with wisdom to care for the earth.

All: Amen.

Leader: May God bless us with courage to live together in unity.

All: Amen.

Leader: May the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

All: Amen.

Recessional Hymn

(Worship Planners are encouraged to follow local customs and those of the worship leaders in the selections for music and in giving guidance to times appropriate for standing, kneeling or sitting.)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

***Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC)** is an ecumenical organization that brings together mainline American denominations and was inaugurated on January 20, 2002, in Memphis, Tennessee on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel. (See list of members on next page.)

Participating full member denominations of Churches Uniting in Christ include: ●

[African Methodist Episcopal Church](#)

- [African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church](#)
- [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#)
- [Christian Methodist Episcopal Church](#)
- [Episcopal Church \(United States\)](#)
- [International Council of Community Churches](#)
- [Moravian Church in North America](#)
- [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [United Methodist Church](#)

Former partners in mission and dialogue

- [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#)

For more information about Churches Unity in Christ visit:

www.churchesuniting.org/about-us

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Types of Local Ecumenical and Interreligious Involvement

There are many different ways for leaders in The United Methodist Church to encourage ecumenical and Interreligious engagement. Locally, there are often several options. If none of the following exists, however, United Methodist clergy and laity are encouraged to start unity movements. Some ideas to consider include the following:

Church to Church Connection: Both laity and clergy can be intentionally involved in Christian unity and interreligious relationships in their contexts and neighborhoods. United Methodists can be

catalysts for community mercy and justice ministries; shared worship services; joint Bible studies; visits to each other's houses of worship; and disaster response ministries. A local pastor or lay leader can get started by simply reaching out to someone in another faith community and asking if they might study together or be in ministry together in some way needed in the area.

Local Conciliar Bodies: The United Methodist Church participates fully in several councils and relationship-building organizations. Many of these groups find expression within the areas of our annual conferences and districts. Pastors and lay people can look in their area for ministerial associations, ecumenical or interfaith covenant groups, study groups, councils of churches, and interfaith communities.

Opportunities for Study: There are several regular events and gatherings in which United Methodists can be engaged. In the United States, for example, there is an annual UMEIT (United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training) event that is held parallel to the National Workshop on Christian Unity. UMEIT USA, led by a team working with the Council of Bishops ecumenical staff, is open to all who wish to register and is an excellent avenue for learning about what is happening in ecumenical in interreligious ministry currently.

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA sponsors a Christianity Unity Gathering each year. And Christian Churches Together sponsors an annual themed plenary, part of which is open to all interested.

National Council of Churches Indiana Partners for Christian Unity & Mission

- [Associated Churches of Fort Wayne & Allen County](#)
- [Christian Ministries of Delaware County](#) (Muncie)
- [Church Community Services](#) (Elkhart)
- [Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis, Inc.](#)
- [Hope Southern Indiana](#)
- [United Religious Community of St. Joseph County](#) (South Bend)

Church Re-organizations: When small congregations shrink to the point of becoming ineffective in making disciples of Jesus Christ, congregations can suggest options to their district superintendents. Our United Methodist Book of Discipline offers options for union and sharing with other local denominations. Paragraph 206 in the Book of Discipline explains the organization of "Cooperative Parishes." Paragraph 207 outlines "Ecumenical Shared Ministries." **Paragraph 208** explains the concepts of "Federated churches", "union churches", "merged churches", and "yoked parishes."

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Most importantly, Prayer and Worship are ways in which United Methodists are called to be involved ecumenically and interreligiously. Local congregations can pray for their neighbor churches and other houses of worship every Sunday during the time of pastoral prayer. Joint worship services can be held on special occasions, such as Thanksgiving, Epiphany and/or Easter.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Organizations in Indiana

Center for Interfaith Cooperation
Indianapolis, IN · In Indiana Interchurch Center
(317) 268-5300

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Ecumenical Stewardship Center
Richmond, IN
(855) 278-4372

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Ecumenical Assembly
Columbus, IN
(812) 372-9421

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Indiana Interchurch Center
Indianapolis, IN
(317) 923-3617

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Love Chapel Center
Columbus, IN
(812) 372-9421

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Decatur County Agape Center
Greensburg, IN
Open now · (812) 222-4273

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Indiana Catholic Conference
Indianapolis, IN · In Catholic Charities
(317) 236-1455

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Ecumenical Catholic Church USA
Laconia, IN
(812) 737-2261

[DIRECTIONS](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Catholic Charities Indianapolis Food Pantry

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 236-1512

Grocery pickup

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Catholic Charities

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 236-1500

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Christian Church-Disciples of Christ

Indianapolis, IN · In Landmark Center
(317) 635-3100

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Center For Congregations

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 237-7799

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and Admin Offices

Volunteer organization

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 924-5769

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Catholic Charities Indianapolis - Food Distribution Center

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 236-1556

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Metro Ministries, Inc.

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 452-4786

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Servants At Work, Inc

Indianapolis, IN
(317) 844-7664

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

People of Praise

South Bend, IN · In Trinity School at Greenlawn
(574) 234-5088

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Second Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian church
Indianapolis, IN
317) 253-6461

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Indiana United Methodist Conference

Carmel, IN · In Meridian Corporate Plaza
(317) 924-1321

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Faith in Indiana

Indianapolis, IN · In St Anthony Catholic Church
(317) 759-3370

[WEBSITE](#)

[DIRECTIONS](#)

Plan now to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity coming in January

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an international Christian ecumenical observance kept annually around Pentecost in the Southern Hemisphere and between January 18-25 in the Northern Hemisphere.

Each year ecumenical partners in a different region are asked to prepare the materials. With roots going back over 100 years, the dedicated octave of prayers has been jointly commissioned and prepared since 1966, after the Second Vatican Council, by the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC.

Communities across Indiana are invited to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an ecumenical service of several Christian congregations coming together in a special worship service.

For 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 resources, visit:

www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/WPCU%202024%20ENG.pdf



Here is a story about Christian Unity that can be used in the future.



Photo: Paul Jeffrey/Life on Earth pictures

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024: “You shall love the Lord your God ...and your neighbour as yourself...”

An ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community has been the convener for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 drafting group. The World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican have now published the material in several languages.

The reflections explore how we find our common identity in the experience of God’s love.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The specific context of Burkina Faso reflects the need to place love at the center of the quest for peace and reconciliation.

The introduction to the materials notes that this quest has often been undermined by the loss of values and of a shared sense of humanity and by a diminished concern for the common good, probity, integrity, and patriotism. “The search for reconciliation has also been weakened by spiritual impoverishment and by the pursuit of easy gains,” reads the introduction. “Faced with these realities, the imperative to witness to the love of God is all the more pressing.”

Christians from Burkina Faso developed the local draft for the resources. As is the tradition, it was finalized by an international group representing the Roman Catholic Church’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission. The resources include an ecumenical opening prayer service, biblical reflections and prayers for eight days, and other elements of worship. The introduction also notes that Christian communities in Burkina Faso try to live the call to love through mutual hospitality.

“We have been invited to live the divine call to love God and our neighbor as ourselves,” reads one prayer of intercession. “As we renew our commitment to this call, may this love strengthen our unity as Christians.”

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Communities across Indiana are invited to observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with an ecumenical service of several Christian congregations coming together in a special worship service.

For 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 resources, visit:

www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/WPCU%202024%20ENG.pdf

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Example Service

For 2024 resources, visit:

www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/WPCU%202024%20ENG.pdf

Prelude/Preparation

The candles are to be lit as the service starts.

Welcome and Introduction to the Week of Prayer – Theme

A commentator welcomes people to the celebration introducing the theme of the prayer.

Hymn

L: Please stand and join in singing the opening hymn as the celebrants enter in procession along the path.

Passing near the “well”, each representative of a participating church will slowly pour the water from a jug into the bowl. This water, from different sources, is a symbol of our unity which is real, though still incomplete.

When the celebrating group is small, if possible, invite people to say their names and to which church they belong.

Opening

Invitation to prayer

Leader: Almighty God, breathe into us the wind of unity that recognizes our diversity,

People: Breathe into us tolerance that welcomes and makes us community, Leader:

Breathe into us fire that unites what is torn apart and heals what is ill, People:

Breathe into us grace that overcomes hatred and frees us from violence, Leader:

Breathe into us life that faces down and defeats death.

People: Blessed be the God of mercy, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and makes all things new. Amen!

Confession

Leader: In humility, as children of God and sisters and brothers in Christ, we receive God’s mercy and respond to God’s call to make new all relationships. Merciful Lord, your Spirit hovered over the waters where diversity sprouted and flourished. We confess our difficulty to live with legitimate differences. Forgive us those attitudes of mind, words and actions that do violence to unity in diversity.

People: O Lord, have mercy upon us.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Leader: Merciful Christ, grace and joy of the multitude, listener and teacher, you give birth to new visions of hope and heal the wounds of mind and body.

We confess that we have failed to listen to voices different from our own, failed to say words that bring healing and hope, and we have perpetuated exclusive attitudes to those who cry out for solidarity and fellowship.

People: O Lord, have mercy upon us.

Leader: Merciful Lord, you are the source of all creation, the Eternal and life-giving Word. We confess that we do not listen to your creation that groans and cries out for liberation and renewal. Help us to walk together and to hear your voice in all living things that suffer and yearn for healing and care. O God, fountain of mercy and grace, pour over us your pardon. May your love transform us into a source of living waters to restore the strength of your people. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Gospel Proclamation

Proclamation or dramatization of the Gospel of John 4:1-42

Meditation or Sermon

We Respond in Faith and Unity Affirmation of Faith The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed
 All: 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: by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made 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. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He 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.

Intercessory Prayer

Leader: God of eternal compassion, as individuals and as community, we ask for light, so we may become more welcoming and understanding towards others and reduce the suffering in our world.

People: Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Leader: God of eternal compassion, teach your children that charity, hospitality and unity are expressions of your revelation and will for humanity.

People: Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!

Leader: God of eternal compassion, we beseech you, grant us peace; teach us and guide us to be builders of a tolerant and non-violent world.

People: Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!

Leader: God of eternal compassion, who spoke to us through creation, then through the prophets and then through your Son Jesus Christ, grant us wisdom to listen to your voice that calls us to unity in our diversity.

People: Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!

Leaders: God of eternal compassion, in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord who as a stranger asked for a drink from a Samaritan woman, give us living water, springing up unto eternal life.

People: Hear us, God of love! Hear this our cry!

The local community may add other prayers.

Offering

Leader: We learn from Jesus to offer our lives as a sign of love and compassion. God, may we become living offerings dedicated to the ministry of your Word and grace.

Offerings are presented to the community.

Leader: God, who are with us and walk in our midst, grant us this day the grace of your light and Spirit so that we may continue our mission and remain faithful to welcoming and listening to all, even those who are different from ourselves. Take away the violence that is in our hearts and the discriminating attitudes that exclude and devalue the human dignity of others. Enable our churches to be welcoming spaces where feast and forgiveness, joy and tenderness, strength and faith become our daily practice, our daily food, our daily movement forward in Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

Note: Local communities are invited to organize the offerings according to local tradition. We suggest that offerings be brought and placed on top of the colorful cloth before the altar. While the offertory takes place, a song is sung, chosen by the local organizing team.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The Lord's Prayer

Leader: With the confidence of the children of God, let us pray:

All: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Benediction, Peace and Sending Forth

Leader: May the Lord God, bless you and protect you, fill your heart with tenderness and your soul with joy, your ears with music and your nostrils with perfume, your tongue with song giving face to hope. May Jesus Christ the living water be behind you to protect you, before you to guide you, by your side to accompany you, within you to console you, above you to bless you. May the life-giving Spirit breathe into you that your thoughts may be holy, act in you so that your work is holy, draw your heart so that you love what is holy, strengthen you that you will defend what is holy. May he make his home in your heart, water its dryness, and melt its coldness, kindle in your innermost soul the fire of his love and bestow upon you a true faith, and firm hope, and a sincere and perfect love.

All: Amen.

Sharing Peace

Leader: May God, who teaches us to welcome each other and calls us to practice hospitality, grant us peace and serenity as we move forward on the path of Christian Unity. As we go in the peace of Christ let us share with each other the sign of peace.

Postlude**Also visit:**

www.oikoumene.org/news/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2024-you-shall-love-the-lord-your-god-and-your-neighbour-as-yourself

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[Return to Table of Contents](#)