

## 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.