

## 2019 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

*Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue (Deuteronomy 16:18-20)*

### THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY CELEBRATED IN SCHOOLS

As Christians around the world celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we invite you to share this celebration with your school community so that children and young people of all ages may come to recognize the need for a strong Christian witness in society, and the blessing this can be for the world.

We encourage you to share *The Story of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* [found below] with your students so they may better understand the purpose of our prayer. This may be shared during morning announcements or in individual classes. You can learn more about the Week by visiting the website [www.weekofprayer.ca](http://www.weekofprayer.ca). This website has pictures and stories of past celebrations of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity across Canada. Perhaps your school will have photos or videos to add to the collection! When sharing on social media, use the hashtag #WPCU2019.

For younger children, you might also wish to use the ideas and activities found in the *Children's Time* resource, available on [www.weekofprayer.ca](http://www.weekofprayer.ca).

### *The Story of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

#### **What is it?**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is an annual *ecumenical* celebration. What this means is that Christians around the world are invited to pray for the unity of all Christians, to reflect on scripture together, to participate in jointly-organized inclusive services, and to share fellowship. In our churches and throughout our communities, Christians will gather during this week to study the word of God together, to consider ways in which we can work together as disciples of Christ, and to join in fellowship and prayer.

In our schools, we can take time during this week to pray for one another and to recognize how we are called to work together.

#### **When does it take place?**

In Canada, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed between January 18<sup>th</sup> (the Feast of the Confession of Saint Peter) and January 25<sup>th</sup> (the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul). We have been celebrating this week in Canada for over 50 years.

## **Why does it matter?**

In the Gospel of John, Christ prays for his disciples before going to the cross. He asks that his followers “may all be one,” as he and the Father are one, “so that the world may believe” and have life in his name (John 17). In this prayer of Jesus, Christian unity is central to the very being of the church and to its mission and witness.

Through the worldwide celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity we strive for “unity in diversity”. This time of shared prayer, reflection, and fellowship invites Christians of different traditions to deepen our relationships and to live and witness together throughout the year.

## **How Can Your School Participate?**

You may choose to highlight the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on a single day during the week that is most appropriate in your context, or you may choose to pray each day during the week using the suggestions for daily prayer. In either case, the prayer is followed by a question for reflection or a suggestion for action, so that we can reflect on concrete ways to witness to our shared faith. For younger children, you might also wish to use the ideas and activities from the *Children’s Time* resource, available on [www.weekofprayer.ca](http://www.weekofprayer.ca).

As teachers and staff, your shared prayer is also a powerful witness to the desire for “unity in diversity”.

## **Prayer for a single day**

Begin with the *Story of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. Then say:

Let us remember all the Christians in our own community of \_\_\_\_\_ (*name of city or town*). And let us remember that Jesus prayed that we may all be one so that the world may believe (John 17:21).

Let us pray. +

Gracious and ever creating God.

We give you thanks for this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the opportunity it gives us to think of how we can pray and work together more.

Merciful Creator,

We thank you for your persistent love and your patience with our brokenness.

Help us work for justice, as you have shown us through your prophets.

Help us to be reconcilers, as you have reconciled us in Jesus Christ.

Help us work with you in the healing of the world.

We pray through Christ, who comes reconciling and making new. Amen.

*Suggestion for action:* Let us remember to pray often that all Christians may work together for justice.

## Daily Prayers for the Week

### Day 1

Begin the week using the prayer for a single day found above.

### Day 2

The Bible says, “Let justice roll down like waters” (Amos 5:24). Christians can sometimes be very committed to prayer and worship, but less concerned for the poor and the marginalized. Sometimes we pray in church, but at the same time oppress our fellow human beings or exploit the environment. We must remember our call to justice.

Let us pray. +

God of the widow, the orphan and the stranger,  
You have shown us the path of justice.  
Help us to follow your way by doing justice as our worship of you.  
As Christians together, may we worship you not only with our hearts and minds,  
but also by our deeds.  
May the Holy Spirit help and guide us to work for justice wherever we are,  
so that many people may be strengthened through our works.  
In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*Question for Reflection:* Where is the link between our works of justice and our worship?

### Day 3

The Bible says, “Be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus teaches us that material things should not be our main concern. Rather, we should strive first for the reign of God and its values, trusting that our heavenly Father will provide for us. We can learn to be content through prayer and through an attitude of gratitude.

Let us pray. +

Compassionate God,  
we thank you for your bountiful gifts.  
Give us the grace to accept all blessings  
in simplicity and with humble gratitude.  
Enable us to be content and ready to share with others who are in need,  
so that all may experience unity in the love that flows from you,  
our Triune God,  
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

*Question for Reflection:* How can we work to improve our attitude of gratitude?

## Day 4

Jesus says he came to bring good news to the poor (Luke 4:18). We live in a world where there is war, starvation, exploitation and injustice. The gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider. As Christians, we are called to be good news for the poor, working in solidarity to restore justice.

Let us pray. +

Almighty God,  
by your Holy Spirit of communion,  
help us to live in solidarity with our neighbour,  
and so share together with your Son Jesus  
in fulfilling your promise of freedom from poverty and oppression.  
We pray in his name. Amen.

*Suggestion for action:* Find out what is happening in your community to promote justice for the poor.

## Day 5

The Bible says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Psalm 27:1). Day by day, year by year, and especially during this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christians join together for common prayer, professing their common baptismal faith, listening for God’s voice in the Scriptures and praying together for unity in Christ’s body. In doing so, they recognise that the Holy Trinity is the source of all unity and that Jesus is the light of the world, who promises the light of life to those who follow him. The many injustices in the world may sadden or anger us but we do not lose hope. We are moved to action. Because the Lord is our light and our salvation and the stronghold of their lives, we do not fear.

Let us pray. +

God our Sustainer,  
we praise you for your loving kindness,  
for upholding us in times of trial,  
and showing us your light in times of darkness.  
Transform our lives so that we may be a blessing for others.  
Help us to live unity in diversity as a witness to your communion,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
one God now and forever. Amen.

*Suggestion for action:* This year’s theme and resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by Christians in Indonesia. Find out more about their struggles and hopes for unity by visiting [www.weekofprayer.ca](http://www.weekofprayer.ca).