2027 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" *(Luke 12:32)*

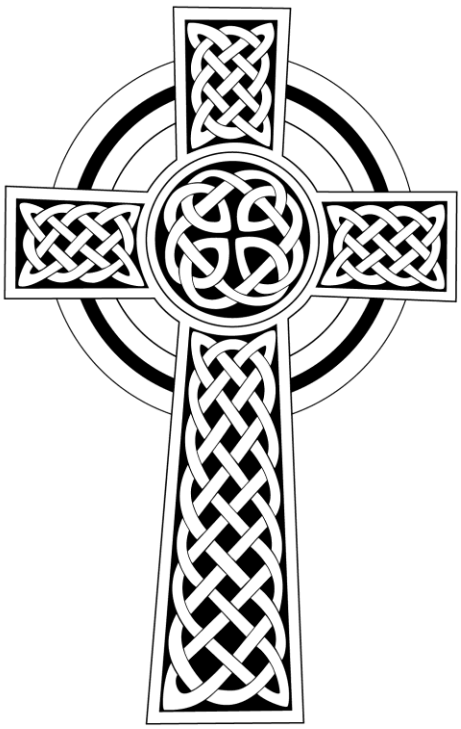
ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The 2027 international and Canadian WPCU resources are available to download at:
www.weekofprayer.ca (English)
www.semainedepriere.ca (French)

We encourage you to be creative in your use of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity resources! For example, you may wish to alter the ecumenical worship service to better suit the context of your community, or you may draw inspiration from the WPCU materials to create something entirely new. Communities should also feel free to use the WPCU materials not only during the traditional Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25 in the northern hemisphere), but throughout the year, to pray for Christian unity and to foster ecumenical fellowship, hospitality, and service.

Celtic Cross Activity

In preparation for the celebration of the worship, and for the symbolic action that takes places during it, printed copies of a Celtic Cross need to be provided for the congregation. Drawing on the image of the rising sun, Irish Celtic Crosses have a circle at their centre, representing the risen Christ, the light of the world. It is desirable that some time before the worship, children and young people be given copies of the Celtic Cross to be painted or coloured. They are invited to bring these with them to the worship. Extra copies should also be available at the time of the worship service.



After the sermon/homily, these images of the Cross that have been decorated by the young people are carried in procession through the congregation and arranged together in the form of a larger Celtic Cross visible to all in a prominent place. A reading from the writings of Saint Patrick follows. Where appropriate, this account might be narrated by a young person in shepherd's attire.

You can either print out the image of a Celtic Cross for children to colour in, and then use in the service, or you can use the below activity and have the children draw the Celtic crosses themselves.

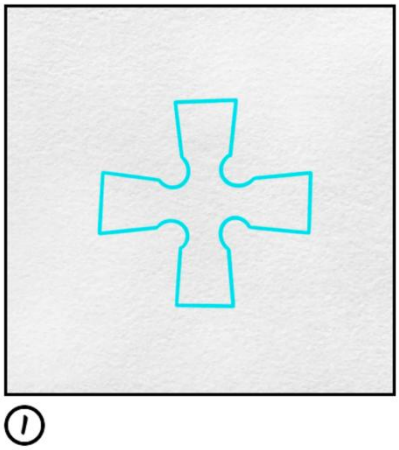
Another option would be to send templates of the Celtic Cross to families and invite them to mail in the crosses before the service.

Drawing a Celtic Cross

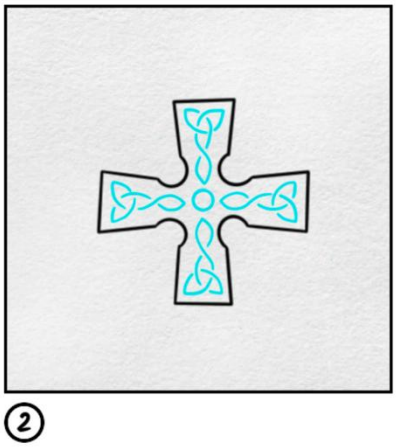
Materials Needed

- Pencil
- Drawing Paper
- Crayons or Colored Pencils
- Black Marker (optional)

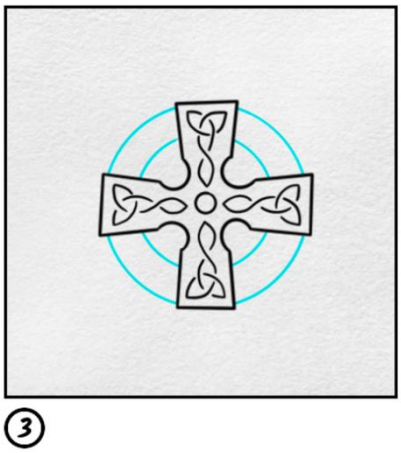
Step 1: Start by drawing a cross with equal parts, similar to this illustration.



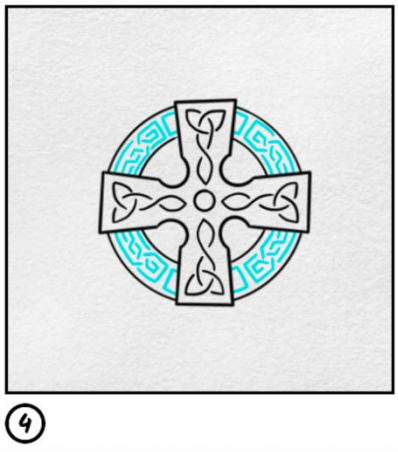
Step 2: Then, add the Celtic knot symbols on each part of the Cross.



Step 3: Add the circle.



Step 4: Add another set of symbols inside the circle.



Step 5: Draw one more set of big circles outside the Celtic cross.



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Step 6: Colour your drawing with green and yellow crayons.



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Shepherding

Jesus is referred to as the Good Shepherd. Shepherding is also an important theme in our service. Leaders are invited to ask children to share what they think a shepherd might do to protect their sheep (lead them away from danger, keep dangerous animals away, watch all of them closely).

The Ping Pong Sheep Game: To illustrate the challenge Jesus has to protect us as the Good Shepherd. Place 5-10 ping pong balls on a bare table, and give the children and/or youth straws, as the ping pong balls move around the table, they have to keep the balls in the middle of the table and not let any get blown off the table. They can work as a group or competing against each other. How difficult is it to keep every "sheep" herded?

Story: The Little Sparrow Who Stopped Worrying

In a quiet meadow, where the grass swayed like green waves, lived a little sparrow named Pip. Pip was small, with feathers the colour of warm bread and eyes that always seemed to be searching the sky. But Pip had a problem—he worried about everything.

"What if I can't find enough seeds tomorrow?" he fretted one morning.
"What if the wind blows my nest away?" he sighed in the afternoon.
"What if winter comes too soon?" he whispered at night.

One day, while Pip was hopping along the meadow, he met an old turtle named Tobias. Tobias was slow, but his eyes twinkled like he knew secrets the wind had told him.

"Why do you look so troubled, little one?" Tobias asked.

Pip poured out all his worries. Tobias listened patiently, then pointed to the sky. "Do you see those birds flying above?"

Pip nodded. "Yes, but they're bigger and stronger than me."
"They don't plant seeds or store food in barns," Tobias said. "Yet every day, they find what they need. The One who made them cares for them. And you, Pip, are every bit as precious as they are."

Pip tilted his head. "But what about my nest? What if it's blown away?"

Tobias smiled. "Look at the flowers in the meadow. They don't sew clothes, yet they are dressed more beautifully than any king. If the One who made the flowers cares for them, don't you think He will care for you too?"

That night, Pip lay in his nest, listening to the rustle of the grass. For the first time, he didn't count his worries. Instead, he whispered, "Thank You for today. I'll trust You for tomorrow."

And from that day on, Pip still searched for seeds and built his nest—but he did it with a heart as light as the wind, knowing he was always in the care of the One who most loved him.

Pip and the Meadow of Trust

In a sunlit meadow, where daisies nodded in the breeze and bees hummed gentle songs, lived a tiny sparrow named Pip. Pip's feathers were soft and brown, and his heart was full of questions—most of them about tomorrow.

"What if I can't find breakfast?" he wondered as the sun rose.
"What if the rain ruins my nest?" he fretted when clouds gathered.
"What if winter comes before I'm ready?" he sighed as the stars appeared.

One afternoon, Pip met a wise old tortoise named Tobias, who was slowly making his way to the pond. Tobias noticed Pip's worried eyes.

"Why so many frowns, little bird?" Tobias asked.
Pip told him about all the things that might go wrong. Tobias listened, then pointed to a flock of swallows darting joyfully through the air.

"They don't plant gardens or store food in barns," Tobias said. "Yet every day, they have enough. The One who made them makes sure of it. And you, Pip, are even more precious than they are."

Pip blinked. "But what if my nest is blown away?"

Tobias nodded toward the meadow's flowers—bright yellows, deep purples, and soft whites swaying in the wind. "They don't weave clothes, yet they are dressed more beautifully than any king. If the One who made the flowers cares for them, don't you think He will care for you too?"

That night, Pip curled into his nest. The wind whispered through the grass, but instead of worrying, he whispered, "Thank You for today. I'll trust You for tomorrow."

From then on, Pip still searched for seeds and mended his nest, but his heart was lighter. He had learned that the One who painted the flowers and guided the swallows would never forget a little sparrow like him.

"Do not be afraid, little flock." (Luke 12:32)

Our scripture is full of stories of people letting go of fear of scarcity or decline and allowing all to collaborate.

For older children and youths: the youth leader may wish to ask the participants to name a fear or worry that exists in their daily life. For example, school, or making friends. Can the group note where God is present in that worry? For example, if we might be worried about getting good grades in school, God is with us as we are studying and learning the subject.

Another story that would work well for a children's lesson is Stone Soup, where the village overcomes their fear of scarcity and shares their resources together. Can we do the same?

Participating groups may want to connect this lesson with their local food bank, where we can donate items after the WPCU service.