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)*

HOW TO ORGANIZE AN ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE OR EVENT

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

General Introduction

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) is an annual ecumenical celebration which traditionally takes place between January 18th (the Feast of the Confession of Saint Peter) and January 25th (the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul) in the northern hemisphere. In celebrating the WPCU, Christians around the world are invited to pray for the unity of all Christians, to reflect on Scripture together, to participate in jointly-organized ecumenical services and events, and to share fellowship.

The purpose of the WPCU resources, and of the following suggestions, is to assist communities and parishes / congregations in creating inclusive, ecumenical celebrations for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. While the materials provided in this year's kit can be used to craft a WPCU-themed service or event in your own parish or congregation, that is not our goal. Our intention is that worship services and events for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be truly ecumenical, promoted widely, and draw leaders and participants from a broad range of Christian traditions in your community.

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.

PLEASE NOTE: *All suggestions below can be adapted for in-person or online services / events. We encourage you, at the earliest planning stages, to reach out to members of your community, especially representatives from Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities, who have experience with organizing in-person or online ecumenical gatherings.*

We also encourage you to inquire about copyright requirements for using texts, music, hymns, and videos / films during in-person and online events. You may wish to invite members of your local organizing committee who have experience with copyright regulations to assist and give them ample time to prepare and troubleshoot.

To assist with the goal of inclusive, ecumenical celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, here are some general suggestions, and a recommended timeline, to help you get started in organizing either in-person events or virtual gatherings. More detailed practical suggestions can be found in the 2027 *Annotated Ecumenical Worship Service* resource.

General Suggestions:

Note: All 2027 international and Canadian WPCU resources mentioned below are available on www.weekofprayer.ca (English) and www.semainedepriere.ca (French).

- An ecumenical *Order of Worship* is available for churches and Christian communities that observe the WPCU together through a single common worship service.
- Communities that observe the WPCU daily may use the material from the *Reflections and Prayers for the Eight Days* resource in their worship services or events.
- Prayers from the *Ecumenical Worship Service* and from the *Reflections and Prayers for the Eight Days* can also be used in other ways as appropriate in your context.
- Those wishing to undertake Bible studies on the 2027 WPCU theme can use the biblical texts and reflection questions from the *Reflections and Prayers for the Eight Days* resource. Each day the discussions can lead to the prayer included in the material.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material in the *Reflections and Prayers for the Eight Days* resource helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying around the world in answering this year's theme: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," based on Luke 12:32.

Suggested Timeline:

4-6 months prior

- Download the 2027 international and Canadian WPCU resources and read through the suggestions for organizing WPCU ecumenical worship services, Bible studies, and other events. You might also be inspired by the photos and stories from previous years' WPCU events across Canada published online at www.weekofprayer.ca / www.semainedepriere.ca!
- Reach out to faith leaders in your neighbourhood by phone, email, or by visiting their place of worship; invite them (or their representatives) to participate in a 2027 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity planning meeting.
- Depending on your local context, appropriate hymns and songs that highlight this year's WPCU theme can be substituted for those suggested in the Canadian materials. Your community may also prefer to select additional music for the gathering / opening and closing times. Adapt the *Order of Worship* to your own situation. We also invite you to consult the 2027 *Canadian Hymn Suggestions* WPCU resource. You may also consider using pre-recorded hymns or music in both in-person and online WPCU events.
- Gather leaders interested in planning an event for a meeting and select the date / time and the venue for in-person events, or the platform / registration / login information for online events. At the meeting, divide tasks (for example, event promotion / communications, worship planning / bulletins, music / musicians, hospitality / refreshments, children's story time / activities).

- Craft a 'Save the Date' media release; decide how you will use social media to promote and report on your event(s). **For social media posts this year, use #WPCU2027 or #weekofprayer (for posts in English) and #SPUC2027 or #semainedepriere (for posts in French).**
- Print an appropriate number of posters for advertising your event(s) in your parishes / congregations and in your community.

2 months prior

- Hold a follow-up planning meeting; divide worship service or event leadership roles; finalize the *Ecumenical Worship Service* and select hymns and other music; decide whether you will use pre-recorded music or videos; decide whether you will require people to register for in-person or online events; print additional posters or other promotional materials, as necessary.
- Finalize plans to promote your event(s) in each participating parish / congregation and in the wider community: for example, assign someone to place posters in grocery stores, libraries, and other public locations; craft another media release with more details about your event(s); divide posters for distribution in local churches; plan to include the details of your event(s) on various church websites and social media.
- Share your event(s) with us for promotion via The Canadian Council of Churches channels at www.weekofprayer.ca / www.semainedepriere.ca or by emailing us at wpcu-spuc@councilofchurches.ca.

2-4 weeks prior

- Communicate with all participating churches; remind them to promote your WPCU event(s) in their worship bulletins, announcements, on their websites / social media, and with posters.

1-2 weeks prior

- Hold a final meeting to confirm all arrangements (event staffing, hospitality, online platform and tech support); walk through the worship service or event outline with leaders and musicians; finalize the bulletin (hardcopy or digital) to be used during your worship service or event.
- Print bulletins or distribute a digital copy to participants.

At event

- For in-person events: Place hospitality ministers / greeters at the doors of the venue, so that people who are unfamiliar with the space can be welcomed, provided with a worship aid or program and a candle, and directed to seating.
- For online events: Designate someone to open your online event early, greet people as they join, and give instructions to have a printed Celtic cross ready.
- At the beginning of your in-person event, ask your worship / event leader – or someone from the host parish / congregation – to let everyone know where the washrooms are located and whether there is a wheelchair-accessible space for those with mobility issues, as you are expecting a number of people who are probably unfamiliar with your space.
- Capture information about how many faith communities are represented via a guest register or online registration.
- Photos / video recordings: At in-person events, assign a photographer / videographer to capture some moments to share via traditional or social media. Post a sign on all doors with a standardized message, such as: "Please be aware that photographs may be taken at today's event and may be used in church media or by The Canadian Council of Churches and its ecumenical partners (in

print or online) to promote and share this event. Your participation today constitutes your agreement to have your photograph taken and used in this way." This notice can also have a little camera icon, such as this one: 📷. At online events, assign someone to make a video recording and to take screenshots. At the beginning of your online event, ask for your participants' permission to record and to take screenshots. Those who do not wish to participate in this way can turn off their cameras.

- **Use hashtags #WPCU2027 or #weekofprayer (for posts in English) and #SPUC2027 or #semainedepriere (for posts in French) when you share photos or stories from your WPCU worship service or event on social media.**
- At the conclusion of the event, speak with participants to ask about their experience and / or to gather material for an article (make sure to get permission if you will attribute any quotes).
- If you would like to share your photos, videos, quotes or stories on the WPCU website (www.weekofprayer.ca / www.semainedepriere.ca) and on The Canadian Council of Churches' social media, please contact our WPCU Program Coordinator, Marina Fanous, at wpcu-spuc@councilofchurches.ca.

After event

- As soon as you are able, meet briefly with the organizing team to reflect on your event(s) and to collect ideas on what went well and what you would change for next year.
- Write an article about your event(s) for submission to local media outlets or for publication on www.weekofprayer.ca / www.semainedepriere.ca websites. Be sure to include pictures or photos!
- Complete your social media communications about your event(s).
- Pass along any helpful feedback you may have to the Canadian Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Writing and Animation Team:
    - You can use the online Comments and Feedback form available at www.weekofprayer.ca / www.semainedepriere.ca.
    - Or you can email our WPCU Program Coordinator, Marina Fanous, at wpcu-spuc@councilofchurches.ca.

  We would love to hear from you!
- Select the organizing team and venue for next year's WPCU event(s).

Joint Outreach Projects

Is there a common project your churches could join together, working alongside other partner organizations, NGOs or local government bodies, to feed the hungry, support migrant families or care for creation, ensuring leadership teams from different churches share in the decision-making?

There might be other invitations emerging from these suggestions. Consider how this week may serve to set up rhythms for the rest of the year that foster deeper Christ-like reconciliation within your community.