

# Order of Service

*Unity – They showed us unusual kindness (Act 28:2)*

## I. The Gathering

*Hymns indicated throughout the service will need to be chosen locally.*

### Gathering hymn

*During the Gathering hymn, church leaders and representatives enter the venue for the ecumenical service of prayer for Christian Unity. These are led by a participant carrying an open Bible for all to see. The Bible is placed in a place of honour in the centre of the worshipping community.*

### Words of Welcome

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

#### And also with you

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, we have assembled here to pray for unity among Christians and reconciliation in the world. Divisions among Christians have existed for many centuries. This causes great pain and is contrary to God's will. We believe in the power of prayer. Together with Christians all over the world, we offer our prayers as we seek to overcome separation.

The resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by different Christian Churches in Malta. The history of Christianity in this small island nation dates back to the time of the apostles. According to tradition, St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, reached the shores of Malta in the year 60 CE. The narrative describing this eventful and providential episode is conveyed to us in the final two chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

This text signals the beginning of Christianity in Malta – a small country made up of two main inhabited islands, Malta and Gozo, as well as other islets- at the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, half way between the southern tip of Sicily and Northern Africa. This biblical land lies at the crossroads of civilizations, cultures and religions.

Our prayers and reflections, today and during this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, are centered on the hospitality shown by the islanders towards those who had just been shipwrecked: "They showed us unusual kindness" (cf. Acts 28:2) May the love and respect we show each other today as we pray for Christian unity be with us throughout the whole year.

### Invocation of the Holy Spirit

*The response to each prayer may be sung by a cantor and repeated by the whole congregation.*

Spirit of love, come upon this assembly and dwell with us.  
**Come Holy Spirit! (or Veni Creator Spiritus!)**

Spirit of Unity, show us the path towards Christian Unity.

**Come Holy Spirit! (or Veni Creator Spiritus!)**

Spirit of Hospitality, teach us to be welcoming.

**Come Holy Spirit! (or Veni Creator Spiritus!)**

Spirit of Compassion, instill within us an attitude of respect for all those whom we meet.

**Come Holy Spirit! (or Veni Creator Spiritus!)**

Spirit of Hope, help us to detach ourselves from all hindrances to our ecumenical journey.

**Come Holy Spirit! (or Veni Creator Spiritus!)**

### Prayers of Pardon and Reconciliation

Forgive us, Lord, for past mistakes, mistrust and misdeeds between Christians from different Churches and traditions.

**Lord, have mercy! (or Kyrie eleison)**

Forgive us, Lord, for remaining in the darkness rather than seeking the path of Light, for you, O Lord, are the only true Light.

**Lord, have mercy! (or Kyrie eleison)**

Forgive us, Lord, for our lack of faith and for our failure to be people of expectant hope and authentic charity.

**Lord, have mercy! (or Kyrie eleison)**

Forgive us, Lord, for having caused pain, hardship, and anguish to others.

**Lord, have mercy! (or Kyrie eleison)**

Forgive us, Lord, for isolating ourselves and remaining indifferent, instead of showing hospitality to all, especially strangers and refugees.

**Lord, have mercy! (or Kyrie eleison)**

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us. *(Ps. 103:8, 11-12)*

**Amen.**

### A song of praise is sung

## II. Listening to the Living Word of God

Father in heaven, open our hearts and minds to your Word.

**Your words are spirit and life.**

Lead us to grow closer to each other in unity and charity.

**Your word is a lamp to our path!**

**Reading Acts 27:18 – 28:10**

*This is a lengthy passage of scripture and it might be helpful to break it into smaller sections and use a team of three or four readers.*

This is the Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God who saves and who heals.**

**Psalm Psalm 107:8-9, 19-22, 28-32.**

*A Cantor or a small choir may sing this Psalm and the congregation invited to sing the Response.*

**Response The Lord has delivered us from the mighty waves.**

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
for his wonderful works to humankind.  
For he satisfies the thirsty,  
and the hungry he fills with good things. **R/.**

Then they cried to the Lord for his steadfast love,  
and he saved them from their distress;  
he sent out his word and healed them,  
and delivered them from destruction. **R/.**

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
For his wonderful works to humankind.,  
And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,  
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy. **R/.**

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he brought them out from their distress;  
he made the storm be still,  
and the waves of the sea were hushed.

Then they were glad because they had quiet,  
and he brought them to their desired haven. **R/.**

Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
for his wonderful works to humankind.  
Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,  
And praise him in the assembly of the elders. **R/.**

*An Alleluia may be sung before (and after) the Gospel reading*

**Gospel Mark 16: 14-20**

This is the Word of the Lord  
**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. You are the Good News!**

*A biblical reflection or short homily follows*

*A hymn is sung*

**III. Responding to the Word of God**

**The Nicene Creed**

Dear brothers and sisters, as we are united in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us proclaim our common faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

**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,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly 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,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,  
who 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.**

### ***The Prayers of the People***

*During the prayers, eight oars (or oar-shaped models) are brought into the assembly by members of different communities. Each bears a single word- Reconciliation, Enlightenment, Hope, Trust, Strength, Hospitality, Conversion and Generosity. The presentation of an oar introduces each of the petitions. After the oar has been held high, it is placed near or in the boat and a time of silent prayer follows. A reader then announces the corresponding petition and all respond.*

We cannot face the storms of life alone. A boat moves forward when all row together. In the face of difficulties, we recognize the need to pull together and to unite our efforts.

Let us pray.

*In silent prayer, the first oar (Reconciliation) is brought forward.*

Gracious God, heal the painful memories of the past which have wounded our churches and continue to keep us apart.

**Hear our prayer for Reconciliation.**

*The same pattern is repeated as the different oars are brought out.*

Gracious God, teach us to fix our course on Christ, the True Light.

**Hear our prayer for Enlightenment.**

Gracious God, strengthen our confidence in your providence when we feel overwhelmed by the storms of life.

**Hear our prayer for Hope**

Gracious God, transform our many separations into harmony and our mistrust into mutual acceptance.

**Hear our prayer for Trust.**

Gracious God, give us courage to speak the truth with justice in love.

**Hear our prayer for Strength.**

Gracious God, dismantle the barriers, visible and invisible, that prevent us from welcoming our sisters and brothers who are in peril or in need.

**Hear our prayer for Hospitality.**

Gracious God, change our hearts and the hearts of our Christian communities, that we may be agents of your healing.

**Hear our prayer for Conversion.**

Gracious God, open our eyes to see the whole of creation as your gift, and our hands to share its fruit in solidarity.

**Hear our prayer for Generosity.**

### ***The Lord's prayer***

**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.**

The people of Malta welcomed Paul and his companions with unusual kindness. Let us greet one other and share the gift of Christ's peace.

*The congregation share the peace of Christ with one another.*

### ***IV. We are sent out together to proclaim the Good News***

We have come together as Christians,  
and therefore as fellow disciples.  
As we yearn for Christian unity,  
let us commit ourselves anew  
to work for this common goal.

*Pause for silent prayer*

*Church leaders who are present may join in proclaiming the Prayer of Blessing.*

May God the father, who called us from darkness into light,  
make us true bearers of God's light.

**Amen.**

May God the Son, who redeemed us by his precious blood,  
empower us to follow his example in serving others.

**Amen.**

May God the Holy Spirit, who is Lord and giver of life,  
strengthen us to endure the shipwrecks of life  
and reach the shores of salvation.

**Amen.**

May the Almighty and Merciful God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
bless and protect us now and forever. **Amen.**

**We will set out together,  
to proclaim the wonders of God's love.  
Amen! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

*A concluding hymn of praise is sung.*