

**Resources for  
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY  
and  
Throughout the year**

**THEME:  
Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power  
(Ex 15:6)**

**2018**  
**January 18 - 25**

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## FOREWORD

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18-25 is an annual celebration observed by Christian churches all over the world. It is symbolic of the visionary prayer of Jesus that Christian disciples may all be one. The sad reality is that we are divided on the basis of religious matters such as traditions, doctrines, practices, and governance, and also on social and political issues as well as economic considerations.

The theme for the 2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, "Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power," is taken from the book of Exodus 15:6. The resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the churches of the Caribbean. The contemporary Caribbean is deeply marked by the dehumanizing project of colonial exploitation.

Today Caribbean Christians of many different traditions see the hand of God active in the ending of enslavement. It is a uniting experience of the saving action of God which brings freedom. For this reason the choice of the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15:1-21), as the motif of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 was considered a most appropriate one.

The themes of the daily prayer material raise some of the contemporary issues addressed by the churches of the Caribbean. Abuses of human rights are found across the region and we are challenged to consider our manner of

welcoming of the stranger into our midst. Human trafficking and modern-day slavery continue to be huge issues. Addiction to pornography and drugs, continue to be serious challenges to all societies. The debt crisis has a negative impact upon the nations and upon individuals. Family life continues to be challenged by the economic restrictions which lead to migration, domestic abuse and violence. The articulations on the prayer themes have however been adapted to the Indian context by the NCCI Secretariat.

Churches all over the globe are called to work together to heal the wounds in the body of Christ. At the same time churches need to discern God's hand at work in bringing about reform, healing and liberation. In other words, churches should be together and work where God is.

*Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad,  
General Secretary*

**BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2018**  
*Exodus 15:1-21*

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea; his picked officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew your adversaries; you sent out your fury, it consumed them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up, the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendour, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy

abode. The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away. Terror and dread fell upon them; by the might of your arm, they became still as a stone until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by. You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord that you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever”.

When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.

Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2018

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (*Ex 15:6*)

### **The Caribbean Region**

Bearing the name of one of the groups of its indigenous peoples the Kalinago people, formerly called the Caribs the contemporary Caribbean region is a complex reality. The region's vast geographical spread includes both island and mainland territories containing a rich and diverse tapestry of ethnic, linguistic and religious traditions. It is also a complex political reality with a variety of governmental and constitutional arrangements, ranging from colonial dependencies (British, Dutch, French, and American) to republican nation states.

The contemporary Caribbean is deeply marked by the dehumanizing project of colonial exploitation. In the aggressive pursuit of mercantile gains, the colonisers codified brutal systems which traded human beings, and their forced labour. Initially, these practices enslaved and decimated and in some cases exterminated the region's indigenous peoples. This was followed by the enslavement of Africans and the "indentureship" of people from India and China.

At each stage, the systems of the colonisers attempted to strip subjugated peoples of their inalienable rights: their identity, their human dignity, their freedom and their self-

determination. The enslavement of Africans was not simply a case of transporting labourers from one location to another. In an affront to God-given human dignity, it commodified the human person, making one human being the property of another. With the understanding of the enslaved as property went other practices that further sought to dehumanize the African. Included among these was the denial of the right to cultural and religious practices and to marriage and family life.

Very regrettably, during five hundred years of colonialism and enslavement, Christian missionary activity in the region, with the exception of a few outstanding examples, was closely tied to this dehumanizing system and in many ways rationalized it and reinforced it. Whereas those who brought the Bible to this region used the scriptures to justify their subjugation of a people in bondage, in the hands of the enslaved, it became an inspiration, an assurance that God was on their side, and that God would lead them into freedom.

### **The Theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018**

Today Caribbean Christians of many different traditions see the hand of God active in the ending of enslavement. It is a uniting experience of the saving action of God which brings freedom. For this reason the choice of the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15:1-21), as the motif of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2018 was considered a most appropriate one. It is a song of triumph over oppression. This theme has been taken up in a hymn, *The Right Hand of God*, written in



a workshop of the Caribbean Conference of Churches in August 1981, which has become an “anthem” of the ecumenical movement in the region, translated into a number of different languages.

Like the Israelites, the people of the Caribbean have a song of victory and freedom to sing and it is a song which unites them. However, contemporary challenges again threaten to enslave and again threaten the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God. While human dignity is inalienable it is often obscured by both personal sin and social structures of sin. In our fallen world societal relationships too often lack the justice and compassion that honour human dignity. Poverty, violence, injustice, addiction to drugs and pornography, and the pain, grief and anguish which follow, are experiences that distort human dignity.

Many of the contemporary challenges are themselves the legacy of a colonial past and slave trade. The wounded collective psyche is manifested today in social problems related to low self-esteem, gang and domestic violence, and damaged familial relationships. Although a legacy of the past, these issues are also exacerbated by the contemporary reality that many would characterize as neo-colonialism. Under existing circumstances it seems almost impossible for many of the nations of this region to pull themselves out of poverty and debt. Moreover, in many places there is a residual legislative framework that continues to be discriminatory.

The right hand of God that brought the people out of slavery, gave continued hope and courage to the Israelites, as it continues to bring hope to the Christians of the Caribbean. They are not victims of circumstance. In witnessing to this common hope the churches are working together to minister to all peoples of the region, but particularly the most vulnerable and neglected. In the words of the hymn, “the right hand of God is planting in our land, planting seeds of freedom, hope and love”.

### **Biblical - Pastoral Reflection on the Text (Ex 15:1-21)**

The Book of Exodus takes us through three periods: the Israelites' life in Egypt (1:1-15:21); Israel's journey through the wilderness (15:22-18:27); and the Sinai experience (19-40). The passage chosen, the 'Song at the Sea' led by Moses and Miriam, details the events leading up to the redemption of the people of God from enslavement. It closes the first period.

#### **“This is my God, and I will praise him” (15:2)**

Verses 1-3 of chapter 15 emphasize the praise of God: “The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him” (15:2). In the song, led by Moses and Miriam, the Israelites sing the praises of the God who has freed them. They realize that the plan and purpose of God to set the people free cannot be thwarted or frustrated. No forces not even Pharaoh's chariots, army and trained military power could frustrate the will of God for his people

to be free (15:4-5). In this joyful cry of praise, Christians from many different traditions recognize that God is the Saviour of us all, we delight that he has kept his promises, and continues to bring his salvation to us through the Holy Spirit. In the salvation that he brings we recognize that he is our God and we are all his people.

### **“Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power” (15:6)**

The liberation and salvation of God's people comes through the power of God. The right hand of God can be understood both as God's sure victory over his adversaries, and as his unfailing protection of his own people. In spite of the determination of Pharaoh, God heard the cry of his people and will not let the people perish because God is the God of life. By his control of wind and sea God shows his will to preserve life and to destroy violence (Ex 15:10). The purpose of this redemption was to constitute the Israelites as a people of praise recognizing God's steadfast love.

The liberation brought hope and a promise for the people. Hope because a new day had dawned when the people could freely worship their God and realize their potential. It was also a promise: their God would accompany them through out their journey and no force could destroy God's purpose for them.

### **Does God use violence to counteract violence?**

Some Church Fathers interpreted the narrative as a metaphor for the spiritual life. Augustine, for example,

identified the enemy which is cast into the sea not as the Egyptians, but as sin.

“All our past sins, you see, which have been pressing on us, as it were from behind, he has drowned and obliterated in baptism. These dark things of ours were being ridden by unclean spirits as their mounts, and like horsemen they were riding them wherever they liked. That's why the apostle calls them 'rulers of this darkness'. We have been rid of all this through baptism, as through the Red Sea, so called because sanctified by the blood of the crucified Lord...”

Augustine saw the story as encouraging the Christian to hope and to persevere, rather than despair, at the pursuit of the enemy. For Augustine baptism was the key constitutive event in establishing the true identity of each person as a member of the Body of Christ. He draws a parallel between Israel's liberating passage through the Red Sea and that of the Christian people in baptism. Both liberating journeys bring a worshiping assembly into being. As such Israel could freely praise the saving hand of God in the victory song of Miriam and Moses. Their redemption constituted the enslaved Israelites as members of the one people of God, united with one song of praise to sing.

## **Unity**

Exodus 15 allows us to see how the road to unity must often pass through a communal experience of suffering. The Israelites' liberation from enslavement is the foundational event in the constitution of this people. For Christians this

process climaxes with the incarnation and Paschal mystery. Although liberation/salvation is an initiative taken by God, God engages human agencies in the realization of his purpose and plan for the redemption of his people. Christians, through baptism, share in God's ministry of reconciliation, but our own divisions hamper our witness and mission to a world in need of God's healing.



## ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

### **Introduction**

The Bible and three sets of chains are integral to the celebration of this Worship Service. The Caribbean writing group suggests that these symbols are prominently placed in the worship space.

The Bible is especially important in the experience of the Caribbean Churches. Historically, indigenous and enslaved peoples experienced atrocities perpetrated by colonizers who, at the same time, brought Christianity. Yet, in the hands of the oppressed peoples of the region, the Bible became a primary source of consolation and liberation. This dynamic of reversal makes the Bible a particularly potent symbol in itself. Therefore, in this service, it is important that a visually significant Bible be placed in the midst of the gathered assembly and that the readings be proclaimed from this same Bible rather than from other books or booklets.

Chains are a very potent symbol of enslavement, dehumanization and racism. They are also a symbol of the power of sin which separates us from God and from each other. The Caribbean writing group encourages the use of real iron chains during the Prayers of Reconciliation in this Worship Service. If iron chains are not feasible, alternative visually strong chains should be used. During the Worship Service, the iron chains of enslavement are replaced by a human chain expressing bonds of communion and united action against modern slavery and all kinds of individual and institutionalised dehumanisation. Inviting the entire assembly to participate in this gesture is an integral part of the worship.

For the song after the proclamation of the Word, the Caribbean writing group suggests the hymn *The Right Hand of God*. Reflecting the song of Miriam and Moses in praise of the liberating action of God in the Book of Exodus, it is associated with the ecumenical movement in the Caribbean, as the Churches work together to overcome the social challenges facing the people of the region.

## Order of the Service

*Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power  
(Ex 15:6)*

- L**      *Leader*  
**C**      *Congregation*  
**R**      *Reader*

### Gathering for Worship

#### SONG

*During the singing of the song, those leading the celebration enter. They should be led by an assistant carrying the Bible. The Bible is placed in a place of honour in the centre of the worship space. The Scripture readings during the service should be proclaimed from this Bible.*

#### WORDS OF WELCOME

- L**      The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
**C**      **And also with you.**
- L**      Dear friends in Christ, as we gather for this service of prayer for unity, we thank God for our Christian heritage, and for his liberating and saving action in human history.

The resources for this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by the churches of the Caribbean. The history of Christianity in that region contains a paradox. On one hand, the Bible

was used by colonizers as justification for the subjugation of the original inhabitants of these lands, along with others who were transported from Africa, India and China. Many people suffered extermination, were put in chains and enslaved, and were subjected to unjust labour conditions. On the other hand, the Bible became a source of consolation and liberation for many who suffered at the hands of the colonizers.

Today, the Bible continues to be a source of consolation and liberation, inspiring the Christians of the Caribbean to address the conditions that currently undermine human dignity and quality of life. As the iron chains of enslavement fall from our hands, a new human bond of love and communion emerges in the human family, expressing the unity prayed for by our Christian communities.

## INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*The response to the invocation may be sung.*

**L** With the Christians of the Caribbean, let us call upon the Holy Spirit to set our hearts on fire as we pray for the unity of the Church. Unite your servants in the bond of unity.

**C** **Come, Holy Spirit!**

**L** Teach us to pray.

**C** **Come, Holy Spirit!**



L Liberate us from the slavery of sin.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Help us in our weakness.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

L Restore us as your children.

C **Come, Holy Spirit!**

## SONG OF PRAISE

### PRAYERS OF RECONCILIATION

L We have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Let us call upon the mercy of God, confident in the saving power of God's Right Hand.

*Three members of the assembly come forward, each carrying a chain. After each petition and response, one of the chains is allowed fall to the ground. The Kyrie response may be sung.*

L From structures that undermine human dignity and enforce new forms of enslavement, deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

C **Kyrie eleison.**

L From decisions and deeds that impose poverty, marginalisation or discrimination on our brothers and sisters, deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

C **Kyrie eleison.**

L From the fear and suspicion that separate us from

each other and place limits on hope and healing,  
deliver us, O God. *Kyrie eleison.*

**C Kyrie eleison.**

**L** The Lord is our strength and our might, and has  
become our salvation. May God, who has redeemed  
us, lead into the abode of holiness.

**C Amen.**

### **PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD OF GOD**

**L** Redeem us, O God, from human oppression,

**C that we may keep your precepts.**

**L** Make your face shine upon your servants,

**C and teach us your statutes.** (cf Ps 119:134-135)

### **Reading from Exodus 15:1-21**

**L** Listen and you will be set free.

**C Thanks be to God.**

*It would be preferable for the psalm to be sung.*

### **Reading/Singing of Psalm 118:5-7, 13-24**

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
his steadfast love endures for ever!

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;  
the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place.  
With the Lord on my side I do not fear.

What can mortals do to me?

The Lord is on my side to help me;  
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,  
but the Lord helped me.  
The Lord is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the  
righteous.  
The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;  
the right hand of the Lord is exalted;  
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.

I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the Lord.  
Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.

This is the Lord's doing;  
it is marvellous in our eyes.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Reading from Romans 8:12-27**

- L** Listen and you will be set free.  
**C** **Thanks be to God.**

*A suitable Alleluia acclamation may be sung before and after the proclamation of the Gospel.*

### **Reading from Mark 5:21-43**

- L** Listen and you will be set free.  
**C** **Thanks be to God.**

## **HOMILY/SERMON**

## **SONG**

## **THE APOSTLES CREED**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

- L** With thanks for our liberation from slavery to sin, let us place our needs before the Lord, asking him to shatter the chains that enslave us and to join us instead with bonds of love and communion.

*Each intercession is read by a different reader. As they finish, the readers each join hands or link arms with members of the assembly, thus creating a human chain.*

**R1** God of the Exodus, you led your people through the waters of the Red Sea and redeemed them. Be with us now and free us from all forms of slavery and from everything that obscures human dignity.

**C** **Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

**R2** God of abundance, in your goodness you provide for all

our needs. Be with us now, help us to rise above selfishness and greed and give us the courage to be agents of justice in the world.

**C Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

**R3** God of love, you created us in your image and have redeemed us in Christ. Be with us now, empower us to love our neighbour and to welcome the stranger.

**C Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

**R4** God of peace, you remain faithful to your covenant with us even when we wander from you, and in Christ you have reconciled us to yourself. Be with us now and put a new spirit and a new heart within us that we may reject violence and instead be servants of your peace.

**C Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

**R5** God of glory, you are all-powerful, yet in Jesus you chose to make your home in a human family, and in the waters of Baptism have adopted us as your children. Be with us now and help us to remain faithful to our family commitments and our communal responsibilities, and to strengthen the bonds of communion with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**C Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

**R6** God, One in Three Persons, in Christ you have made us one with you and with one another. Be with us now and by the power and consolation of the Holy Spirit, free us from the self-centredness, arrogance and fear that prevent us from striving towards the full visible unity of your Church.

**C Lay your hands on us, O Lord, that we may live.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**L** Let us join our hands, bound not by chains but by the love of Christ that has been poured into our hearts, and pray to the Father in the words that Jesus taught us.

*The Lord's Prayer may be sung.*

**Our Father.....**

*After the Lord's Prayer, still holding hands, the assembly may sing a familiar song that celebrates their unity.*

*After the song, the Sign of Peace may be exchanged.*

## COMMISSIONING

**L** Redeemed by the Right Hand of God, and united in the One Body of Christ, let us go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**C** **The Spirit of the Lord is upon us,  
because the Lord has anointed us  
to bring good news to the poor.  
to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.  
Amen! Alleluia!**

## SONG

## BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

**Day 1: You shall also love the Strangers, for you were  
Strangers in the land of Egypt.**

**Texts:**

Leviticus 19: 33 -34    You shall love the alien as yourself

Psalms 146                The Lord watches over strangers

Hebrews 13: 1 -13      Some have entertained angels  
without knowing it

Matthew 25: 31 - 46    I was a stranger and you welcomed me

**Context:**

*After India becomes independent many were found strangers in the new land(s) due to the partition of Nations and States. Several communities welcomed, accepted and extended hospitality to those strangers. Indeed several started living in different places as children of those soils. But, in recent times, the right-wing fundamentalists and regionalists have been propagating a sense of prejudice, hate campaigns and discrimination against the strangers who migrate from one place to another for their life, livelihood and future due to climate change, anti-people developmental and economic policies of the State and other such factors. In most contexts they have been facing inhospitality and legal barriers. The National Council of Churches in India has identified 'migration' as one of its ministerial focuses and facilitating the Indian Churches to become 'welcoming churches'.*

**Reflection:**

The Israelites' memory of being strangers in the land of Egypt lay behind the Law's instruction that God's people were to welcome strangers in their midst. The memory of their own exile was expected to promote empathy and solidarity with contemporary exiles and strangers. Like Israel, our common Christian experience of God's saving actions goes together with remembering both alienation and estrangement - in the sense of estrangement from God and from God's kingdom. This kind of Christian remembering has ethical implications. God has restored our dignity in Christ and made us citizens of God's kingdom, not because of anything we did to deserve it but by God's own free gift in love. We are called to do likewise, freely and motivated by the love of God. Christian love is to love like the heavenly parent, which is to recognise dignity and to give respect and thereby to help bring healing to the broken human family.

**Prayer:**

Eternal God,

You belong to 'all' cultures and lands as ... God 'OF' all - God 'FOR' all.

You call us to welcome the strangers in our midst of communities, fellowships and congregations.

Help us by your Spirit, to love our sisters and brothers who are found strangers, welcoming all in Your name and living in the justice of your kingdom.

This we pray in the name of Jesus who identified with strangers..... *Amen*



**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is planting in our land,  
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;  
in these many-peopled lands,  
let his children all join hands,  
and be one with the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Rev. R. Christopher Rajkumar,  
Ex. Secretary - Unity and Mission)

**Day 2: No longer as a slave but a Beloved Kin****Texts:**

Genesis 1:26-28	:	God created humankind in God's own image
Psalms 10:1-10	:	Why, O Lord, do you stand far off?
Philemon	:	No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother
Luke 10:25-37	:	The Parable of the Good Samaritan

**Context:**

*Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which victims are forced or tricked into sex work, child labour and the harvesting of organs for the profit of the exploiters. It is a global, multimillion-dollar industry. In India, trafficking has been recognized as an organised crime and thus needs a holistic approach for its eradication. In spite of the increasingly protectionist policies of countries of destination which also*

*constitute labour receiving countries and the subsequent restriction on legal forms of migration, there is a growing incidence of trafficking of Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi women and children across nation. India is an origin, transit and destination country for trafficking.*

### **Reflection:**

One of the first things we learn about God in the Hebrew and Christian Bible is that God created humankind in his own image. However, this profound and beautiful truth has often been obscured or denied throughout human history. Categorizing Dalits, Tribals and Adivasis as inferior and backward or outcaste, thus discriminating, marginalising, and alienating them is sin. They are entitled to fullness of life, dignified respect, and participatory inclusion in society. Jesus challenged the social norms that devalued the human dignity of Samaritans, describing the Samaritan as the 'neighbour' of the man who had been attacked on the road to Jericho a neighbour to be loved, according to the Law. And Paul, made bold in Christ, describes the once-enslaved Onesimus as 'a beloved brother', transgressing the norms of his society and affirming Onesimus's humanity.

Christian love must always be a courageous love that dares to cross borders, recognising in others a dignity equal to our own. Like St Paul, Christians must be 'bold enough in Christ' to raise a united voice in clearly recognising trafficked persons as their neighbours and their beloved brothers and sisters, and so work together to end modern-day slavery.

**Prayer:**

Gracious God, draw near to our Dalit, Tribal/ Adivasi brothers, sisters and children who are victims of human trafficking, assuring them that you see their plight and hear their cry. May your Church be united in compassion and courage to work for that day when no one will be exploited and all will be free to live lives of dignity and peace. This we pray in the name of the Triune God who can do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. *Amen.*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God is lifting in our land,  
lifting the fallen one by one;  
each one is known by name,  
and rescued now from shame,  
by the lifting of the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Mr. Pradip Bansrior,  
Ex. Secretary - Dalit and Tribal/ Adivasi Concerns)

**Day 3: Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit****Texts:**

Exodus 3:4-10	God frees those who are in human bondage
Psalms 24:1-6	Lord, we are the people who seek your face
1 Cor. 6:9-20	Therefore glorify God in your body
Matthew 18:1-7	Woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

**Context:**

*Many Christian churches in India share a concern about the issue of pornography, especially via the internet. Pornography has destructive consequences for human dignity, particularly for children and young people. Youth are being led to believe that their worth in society is intimately tied to their ability to live up to culture's ungodly sexual expectations. Sex is more or less worshiped today. A person's sexual prowess and attractiveness, by culture's standards, has become a mark of great value. Like slavery, pornography commodifies human beings, ensnares those addicted to it and damages wholesome loving relationships.*

**Reflection:**

The book of Exodus demonstrates God's concern for people in human bondage. God's revelation to Moses at the burning bush was a powerful declaration of his will to free his people. God observed their misery, heard their cry and so came to deliver them. God still hears the cry of those who are subject to enslavement today, and wills to deliver them. While sexuality is a gift of God for human relationships and the expression of intimacy, the misuse of this gift through pornography enslaves and devalues both those caught up in producing it and those who, especially the youth, consume it. God is not impervious to their plight and Christians are called to be similarly concerned.

St Paul writes that we are called to give glory to God in our own bodies, which means that every part of our lives, including our relationships, can and should be an offering

pleasing to God. Christians must work together for the kind of society that upholds human dignity and does not put a stumbling block before any of God's beautiful creation of young people and their lives, but, rather, enables them to live in the freedom which is God's will for them a youthful life in freedom with responsibility.

**Prayer:**

By your heavenly grace, O God,  
restore us in mind and body,  
create in us a clean heart and a pure mind  
that we may give glory to your Name.  
May the churches attain unity of purpose  
for the sanctification of your people,  
through Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is healing in our land,  
healing broken bodies, minds and souls;  
so wondrous is its touch,  
with love that means so much,  
when we're healed  
by the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Mr. Jianthaolung Gonmei,  
Ex. Secretary- Youth Concerns)

## Day 4: Hope and Healing

### Texts:

Isaiah 9:2-7a.	His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace.
Psalms 34: 1-14.	Seek peace, and pursue it.
Revelation 7: 13-17.	God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
John 14: 25 - 27.	Peace I leave with you.

### Context:

*We are living in a time when there is much polarisation between communities in India, leading to much distrust and suspicion. As religious communities, our painful history of division, violence, litigation and strife follow us today, almost like our shadows, as we grapple with it everyday. The marginalised among us continue to face stigma and discrimination, not just from society, but from their own homes, families, churches.*

### Reflection:

There is a close relationship between God's presence in our lives and the realisation of peace, within us and among us. We have found it convenient to limit this experience within our own person, family and community at times, rarely engaging in a shared experience. It is almost like, we refuse to recognise God beyond our self made boundaries. And this becomes stronger when we have a mountain of painful history standing between us. Seeking peace and pursuing it becomes our God-led initiative, whereby we are asked to

follow the footsteps of Christ, in holding his hands and taking the courageous step to cross our boundaries and seek healing and reconciliation. Let us be assured of our Lord's assurance of his peace to stay with us, as we take this difficult step, which though may lead us to alienation from our contemporaries and within our own home and church. In the long run, we will have real friends in Christ, people who love God coming together with us. Crucially, we have started our journey towards embracing healing in our lives.

To what extent does our church life lead us towards a reconciling, healing experience with our neighbour, with those feeling marginalised, victimised, the voiceless? Can we feel the pain of division, separation, victimisation, marginalisation, in the most genuine way, so as to be able to proactively engage in the ministry of healing and reconciliation? Peace is a definite possibility, as long as we want it to be, a shared reality.

**Prayer:**

God who understands our journey, through our trials, barriers and inhibitions, walk with us as we seek your discernment, strength and inspiration to guide us to walk with you in overcoming them. Breathe in us, and fill our hearts and minds with your love, that we may embrace each other with your love and Spirit. Heal our brokenness, as individuals, as communities, and engage us with a renewed heart and mind, transcending man made barriers and interests. This we pray in the name of our risen Lord. *Amen.*

**Thought:**

*Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?  
 Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
 Will you use the faith you've found to re-shape the world  
 around,  
 Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you  
 in me?  
 Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my  
 name.  
 Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
 In your company I'll go, where your love and footsteps  
 show  
 Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.*

(Contributed by Fr. Thomas Ninan,  
 General Coordinator, ESHA)

### **Day 5: Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide in the land!**

**Texts:**

Deuteronomy 1:19-35	The Lord God goes before you and carried you
Psalms 145:9-20	The Lord upholds all who are falling
James 1:9-11	The rich will disappear like a flower in the field
Luke 18:35-43	Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

**Context:**

*Indian mainstream media, largely owned by and representing the  
 interests of the dominant classes and high caste people, grossly  
 under-represents people in the margins of society such as the dalits*



*who belong to the lower caste and other disadvantaged communities. This is true also of other domains in which marginalized people are denied communication and other rights. In this context, the lack of channels, paradigms and inability to communicate their own concerns and bring to the fore their experiences of discrimination, has led to ignorance, unaddressed issues of inequality, inaccessibility to basic services, neglect, denial of rights and exclusion from the processes of decision-making and policy-making. There is an urgent need to develop communication processes, systems and approaches to be used to achieve the objectives of ensuring communication rights, participation, inclusion and empowerment which are integral components of an equitable and just society that we strive towards.*

**Reflection:**

We can imagine the noise of the crowd as Jesus enters Jericho. Many voices shout down the cry of the blind beggar. In today's terms, the blind beggar is disadvantaged because of lack of communication opportunity in access or ability which can lead to loss of the person's communication right. He is a distraction and an embarrassment which represents the people relegated to the margins of society because they and their issues are not considered important enough. But through all this tumult Jesus hears the blind man's voice, just as God always hears the cries of the poor in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Lord who upholds the falling not only hears, he responds. Thereby, the beggar's life is radically transformed when he is able to tell his own story being given communication access.

The disunity of Christians can become part of the world's tumult and chaos. Like the arguing voices outside Jericho, our divisions can drown out the cry of the poor and the disadvantaged. However, when we are united we become more fully Christ's presence in the world, better able to hear, listen and respond. With our communication systems and processes in place, there is greater scope for inclusivity and participatory decision-making. There are no 'voiceless' people. There are only unheard voices. Rather than increasing the volume of discord, we must enable conditions that make it possible to truly listen, and so discern the voices that most need to be heard.

**Prayer:**

Loving God, you lift up the poor and distressed and restore their dignity.

Teach us to hear, listen and heed the voices of people around us.

Hear now our prayer for the poor and the distanced, restore their hope and lift them up, that all your people may be one.

This we pray in Jesus name. *Amen.*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is lifting in our land,  
lifting the fallen one by one;  
each one is known by name,  
and rescued now from shame,  
by the lifting of the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Rev. Caesar David,  
Ex. Secretary - Communications)

## Day 6: Let us look to the interests of others

### Texts:

Isaiah 25:1-9	Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation
Psalms 82	Maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute
Philippians 2:1-4	Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others
Luke 12:13-21	Be on your guard against all kinds of greed

### Context:

*The ideology of globalization is maximizing of profits by Multi National Corporations through business investments in countries all over the globe. The proprietors of MNCs exploit cheap labour in those countries as well as cheap natural and mineral resources. Even middle class Christians get carried away by the word "Development" because they too enjoy the fringe benefits of MNC businesses without critically analysing the harm that is being inflicted on vulnerable earth communities. Globalization is driving people to be self-centred and selfish, to be becoming prosperous and successful at the cost of others.*

### Reflection:

The witness of the Scriptures is consistent that God is engaged in affirmative action for the poor: the right hand of

God acts for the powerless against the powerful. Similarly, Jesus consistently warns against the dangers of greed. Despite these warnings, however, the sin of greed often infects our Christian communities and introduces logic of competition: one community competing against the next. We need to remember that insofar as we fail to differentiate ourselves from the world, but conform to its divisive competing spirit, we fail to offer 'a refuge for the needy in distress, a shelter from the storm'.

For our different churches and confessions, to be rich in the sight of God is not a case of having many members belonging or donating to one's own community. Rather, it is to recognise that as Christians we have countless brothers and sisters right across the world, united across the economic divisions of 'North' and 'South'. Conscious of this fraternity in Christ, Christians can join hands in promoting economic justice for all.

**Prayer:**

Almighty God,  
give courage and strength to your church  
to continually proclaim justice and righteousness  
in situations of domination and oppression.  
As we celebrate our unity in Christ,  
may your Holy Spirit help us  
to look to the needs of others. *Amen*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is striking in our land,*

*striking out at envy, hate and greed;  
our selfishness and lust,  
our pride and deeds unjust,  
are destroyed by the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Mr. Samuel Jayakumar,  
Ex. Secretary - Policy, Governance and Public Witness)

## **Day 7: Building family in household and church**

### **Texts:**

Exodus 2:1-10	The birth of Moses
Psalms 127	Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain
Hebrews 11:23-24	Moses was hidden by his parents ... because they saw that the child was beautiful
Matthew 2:13-15	Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt

### **Context:**

*In our country, children are among the most vulnerable communities in society. India is the sixth dangerous country in the world for children. 53 percent of children in India face sexual abuse (including male children) and many other forms of abuses and violence. Statistics reveal that most of the time children face abuse at the hands of family members, relatives and people whom they know. The Girl Child is deprived of her share of food. Female foeticide and infanticide is also a common phenomenon in many parts of India. Many times children living in poverty are sold by their own family members and are trafficked especially girl*

*children. The process of migration from village to cities has further increased the vulnerability of children.*

**Reflection:**

Families are of central importance for the protection and nurture of children. The Bible accounts of the infancies of both Moses and Jesus, who were in mortal danger from the moment they were born because of the murderous orders of angry rulers, illustrate how vulnerable children can be to external forces. These stories also show how action can be taken to protect such little ones. Matthew presents us with a model of fatherhood that is in loving fidelity to the Lord's command, especially in turbulent times.

The Scriptures view children as a blessing and as hope for the future. For the Psalmist, they are 'like arrows in the hand of a warrior'. As Christians, we share a sacred calling to live as supportive family networks and create safe homes for children. We should rely on the strength of the Lord and reflect our faith in action task to building strong communities in which children are protected and can flourish.

**Prayer:**

Gracious God,

you sent your son to be born in an ordinary family  
with ancestors who were both faithful and sinful.

We ask your blessing upon all families  
within households and communities.

We ask for your blessing to build safe home free of  
violence

We pray especially for the unity of the Christian family  
so that the world may believe.  
In Jesus' name we pray. *Amen*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is writing in our land,  
writing with power and with love;  
our conflicts and our fears,  
our triumphs and our tears,  
are recorded by the right hand of God.*

(Adapted by Rev. Moumita Biswas,  
Exe. Secretary - Women Concerns)

**Day 8: He will gather the dispersed... from the four  
corners of the earth**

**Texts:**

Isaiah 11:12-13      Ephraim shall not be jealous of  
Judah, and Judah shall not be hostile  
towards Ephraim

Psalms 106:1-14, 43-48      Gather us to give thanks to your  
holy name

Ephesians 2:13-19      He has broken down the dividing  
wall

John 17:1-12      I have been glorified in them

**Context:**

*We live in a world where individuals, peoples and nations are getting scattered. The scattering is because of various reasons social, economic and political: human trafficking; migration in search of better economic prospects; developmental projects of the governments and multi-national corporations leading to the displacement of people from their homelands; forced migration because of natural problems, such as drought, floods, global warming, rising sea levels; forced migrations because of war, militant fundamentalist pressures and terrorist assaults, evacuation of stateless people, etc. Will such dispersed people ever return to their homelands? Will they find space to live in dignity?*

**Reflection:**

One of the important themes of the Bible is that of restoration. Individuals are restored, like the prodigal son, who strays away from home, suffers, 'comes to himself' and then is restored by the loving forgiving father, with dignity in the family. Nations are restored, like the Jews who were taken into exile, far from home, but are eventually restored to their homeland because of God's intervention through King Cyrus.

Involved in the restoration is God's purpose of forming communities of people who will be faithful to God's vision and mission. The vision is that of a new creation in which God will dwell in their midst, all sorrow and suffering will be gone and people will enjoy the blessings of ecological healing and integrity. The mission involves intervention in



lives and history through the endeavours of restored and renewed communities.

The restored and renewed communities have one very special mark. They are ecumenical communities where there are no divisive distinctions of jealousy, envy, hostility or hatred, and no divisions based on race, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, gender, generation, health and ability. Implied in the lives of such communities are the principles of justice and love, of respect for and appreciation of diversity, and integral living. Thus, they partner with, and give glory to, the Creator through their lives and work.

**Prayer:**

Lord, we humbly ask that, by your grace, the churches throughout the world may become instruments of your peace.

Through their joint action as ambassadors and agents of your healing, reconciling love among divided peoples, may your Name be hallowed and glorified. *Amen.*

**Thought:**

*The right hand of God  
is planting in our land,  
planting seeds of freedom, hope and love;  
in these many-peopled lands,  
let his children all join hands,  
and be one with the right hand of God.*

(Adapted, and contributed to, by  
Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad, General Secretary)

**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**  
**Themes 1968-2018**

*Materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used in 1968*

- 1968** To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969** Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)  
 (Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970** We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)  
 (Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971** ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
 (2 Corinthians 13:13) (Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)
- 1972** I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)  
 (Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973** Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)  
 (Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974** That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord  
 (Philippians 2:1-13) (Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1975** God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)  
 (Material from an Australian group Preparatory

meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)

- 1976** We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or, Called to become what we are (Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches. Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977** Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)  
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978** No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)  
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979** Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)  
(Material from Argentina Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980** Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic Preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981** One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12:3b-13) (Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982** May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)  
(Material from Kenya Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983** Jesus Christ - the life of the world (1 John 1:1-4)  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland)

Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey),  
Switzerland)

- 1984** Called to be one through the cross of our Lord  
(1 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)  
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985** From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)  
(Material from Jamaica Preparatory meeting held in  
Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986** You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)  
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) Preparatory  
meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987** United in Christ - a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17  
-6:4a) (Material from England Preparatory meeting  
held in Taizé, France)
- 1988** The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)  
(Material from Italy Preparatory meeting held in  
Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989** Building community: one body in Christ (Romans  
12:5-6a)(Material from Canada Preparatory meeting  
held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990** That they all may be one... That the world may believe  
(John 17) (Material from Spain Preparatory meeting  
held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991** Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and  
Romans 15:5-13)(Material from Germany

Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)

- 1992** I am with you always... Go, therefore (Matthew 28:16-20) (Material from Belgium Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993** Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23) (Material from Zaire Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)
- 1994** The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)(Material from Ireland Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995** Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17) (Material from Faith and Order Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996** Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22) (Material from Portugal Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997** We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20) (Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998** The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27) (Material from France Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)

- 1999** He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7) (Material from Malaysia Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000** Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14) (Material from the Middle East Council of Churches Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001** I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6) (Material from Romania Preparatory meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002** For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9) (Material CEEC and CEC Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003** We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18) (Material churches in Argentina Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004** My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27) (Material from Aleppo, Syria Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)
- 2005** Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23) (Material from Slovakia Preparatory meeting in Piestaň, Slovakia)
- 2006** Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them (Matthew 18:18-20) (Material from Ireland Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)

- 2007** He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37) (Material from South Africa Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)
- 2008** Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18) (Material from USA Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009** That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28) (Material from Korea Preparatory meeting held in Marseilles, France)
- 2010** You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48) (Material from Scotland Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011** One in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42) (Material from Jerusalem Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012** We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58) (Material from Poland Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)
- 2013** What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8) (Material from India Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)
- 2014** Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17) (Material from Canada Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)

- 2015** Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4: 7)  
(Material from Brazil Preparatory meeting held in  
São Paulo, Brazil)
- 2016** Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1  
Peter 2:9)(Material from Latvia Preparatory meeting  
held in Rīga, Latvia)
- 2017** Reconciliation - The love of Christ compels us (2 Cor  
5:14-20) (Material from Germany Preparatory  
meeting held in Wittenberg, Germany)
- 2018** Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (Ex 15:6)  
(Material from the Caribbean Preparatory meeting  
held in Nassau, Bahamas)