

## Prayer for Christian Unity Sunday

January 16, 2022

*Prepared by Pastor Japhet Kenn Vallera of CMAC-NWMJ*

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**Biblical Text:** John 17:11-22

“...<sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that<sup>[b]</sup> you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost,<sup>[c]</sup> so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

<sup>20</sup> “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,<sup>[f]</sup> so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one...”

### Notes for Worship Preparations

- Open Bible and Christ Candle on the altar.
- The worship mood will be hopeful and prayerful emphasizing the importance solemnity, with sincerity and dedication of prayers for the unity of all Christians around the world.

For a meaningful celebration at the end of worship during the prayer of dedication (***Collective Prayer for Christian Unity***), the congregation may form a big circle, while holding their hands. Now every single member (*including children if necessary*) may utter a **SINGLE WORD** that best describes their prayer for the Christian community. Until such time that all have taken their part in uttering the **WORD** that best represents their prayer. The pastor may consolidate the common and pressing words being mentioned several times and put in a summary prayer and end it together with **THE LORD’S PRAYER**.

Now for the benediction, everyone may say the words in the benediction litany or the pastor will utter the benediction and in response to the benediction the entire congregation will say the word "AMEN" in unison.

### **Short Reflection**

The Church of God, as Christians, has the likeness of a family. A large family with diverse interests and tasks but united when approaching the table for food and discussing things related to relationships, desires, and life plans. Also, in the time of Jesus, he called his disciples who were not just fishermen. There was a tax collector, there was also a zealot (a group that opposed the Romans). They are both different. We see here that even if there were differences in viewpoints and principles among them, they argue but they never fight. Here we see that although they are different in origin, they are united in faith. It was a miracle. In our time, there are also existing groups that are exclusive (purely female, purely male) because there is the concern that because of different interests and mindsets, they would create conflicts that result to division.

As Paul says, without the nature of fellowship, and looking at the same desire will instead lead to trouble and no peace of mind. By the time the American missionaries arrived here in the Philippines, one of the ways to prevent quarrel among them was to assign jurisdictions. This is why the UCCP churches may have in some ways vary in its practices and traditions (Mindanao- Congregationalists; Visayas- Presbyterian; Luzon- Methodist/Disciples). But despite these differences, the missionaries were united in a common goal. And through them, we learned the lesson of unity in the presence of diversities. The missionaries taught us to accept one another, and learn how to appreciate our differences. These experiences from the past brought us to reflect on Christ's prayer for unity. It is his desire that "all may be one." Unity in short comes from the heart of Jesus. It is there where it finds its roots. But then, because of the fact that Jesus did pray for it, implies that it is not yet a reality. And we, as His followers, ought to fulfill that prayer and make it into reality. And that prayer of Jesus Christ is intended for us, handed down to us, as our task to act on.

The work for unity is tedious and challenging. We need to rise above our differences and come to the table to seek that which can change people's lives and work on things that will usher in the realization of God's reign.

## THE LITURGY

### OPENING SENTENCE

*"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."  
John 17:20-21*

### PREPARATORY MUSIC

*(Soft music played about the Church as Body of Christ)*

### PROCESSIONAL

#### OPENING SONG      **"People of God, Let Us Adore Together"**      **HFJ #241**

*People of God, let us adore together  
Christ who has called us from night and into day  
We've been redeemed by his eternal goodness  
To live up to his love and holiness.*

*Body of Christ magnificent is our name  
We are in holy communion with the Lord  
We trust him for the life that he has given  
To save us from our death and sin and shame.*

*Called to be saints, all consecrated are we  
Christ's willing servants in service for the world  
We're called to serve the lost, the high, the lowly  
And anyone who needs his saving grace.*

*O bride of Christ, from heaven he came to call us  
Into the baptism in his purity  
We are the new Jerusalem that will be  
People of God through all eternity.*

### LIGHTING OF CHRIST CANDLE

#### CALL TO CELEBRATION

*(Based from Romans 14:1-9)*

**Liturgist:** Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not to quarrel over opinions.

**People:** Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables.

**Liturgist:** Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them.

**People:** Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord<sup>[b]</sup> is able to make them stand.

**Liturgist:** Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their minds.

**People:** Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also, those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God.

**Leader:** We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.

**People:** If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

**ALL:** For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

**HYMN OF CELEBRATION "The Church that is Called by God"**

**HFJ #315**

*In the church that is called by God  
where the believers come to worship God  
with joy and gladness in their hearts,  
For Jesus Christ is the Lord that reigns in their lives  
binding them in the pureness of His love.*

**Chorus:**

*Praise you, God, you are Lord of humankind,  
you are savior of the world,  
you are savior of us all.  
Let all people their voices raise to the Lord,  
eternal praise, to the Lord eternal praise.*

*In the church that is called by God  
where the believers strive to obey and serve  
and to do the will of the Lord;  
In times of ease and in times of great need,  
all would follow Christ's command. (Cho.)*

*In the church that you have called, O God,  
Where the believers strive to live in love,  
And good will abound with joy and hope.  
O strengthen them in your love and spirit, Lord  
And may you have prasiad for evermore.(Cho.)*

## **OPENING PRAYER (All)**

We come to you, O God eternal, recognizing that you have created us to seek you, to love you, and to find our identity within the fellowship of your faithful people. Help us so to participate in this service of praise and thanksgiving offered to you as our faithful service, that we may be opened to receive from you new gifts of grace, new glimpses of truth, and deeper experience of the life you have given us as a Christians and for the unity of your people; this is our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

## **GLORIA PATRI**

*Glory be to the Father, unto the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.*

*As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be – world without end. Amen...*

## **THE ACT OF PENITENCE**

### **Call to Confession (Liturgist)**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, God invites us to come even with hearts troubled by the memory and the burden of our offenses; of that which we ought to have done, but have not done; of that which we have ought to have spoken, but have not spoken. Of those things, and of all our sins remembered and forgotten. Now is the time for us to repent and turn to God. Let us all ask God, to purify and strengthen our hearts; that we may walk steadfastly and uprightly before our Redeemer. Let us confess our sins and shortcomings to God in prayer.

### **Prayer of Confession**

**Liturgist:** Our God, whose Son is the light of the world; in His penetrating light we acknowledge our darkness; In His constant grace, our careless love;

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His generous giving, our sordid grasping

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His equal justice, our dire prejudice

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His fortitude, our fearful failure

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His inclusive love, our deep divisions

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His pure sacrifice, our soiling sins

**People:** *Forgive us Lord, we pray.*

**Liturgist:** In His cross our forgiveness and His resurrection

**ALL:** We ask and seek for God's mercy and grace, we pray. Amen

### **Silent Moment (with soft music)**

### **Assurance of God's Pardon (Minister)**

Hear the promises of God to those who truly repent of their sins and trust in Christ: Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.



*Our purpose fades, focus shifts, and conflicts soon attends.*

*Come, spirit, build your church a new, that all may do their part  
Together finding life in you, diverse yet one heart.  
So may your people seek your will, transformed in all our ways.  
We offer body mind and skill, a sacrifice of praise.*

**DOXOLOGY**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise God all creatures here below,  
Praise God above ye heavenly host,  
Creator, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (All)**

Lord, we thank for Your faithfulness. Thank you that we can always trust in You. You are an abundant God and out of Your great mercy you have given us so much. We give you this offering today. With it we worship You and give our whole selves to You. Remind us to be thankful and contented for the many gifts you have showered upon us. Your faithfulness shows how great you are. Bless these gifts, and make it valuable enough to usher your mission to the community where this church belongs. All praise and thanksgiving be upon you, for your greater glory. Amen

**HYMN OF DEDICATION**

***The Church's One Foundation***

**HFJ #242**

*The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
We are Christ's new creation by water and the Word.  
From heaven he came and sought us in love to set us free;  
With precious blood Christ bought us for all eternity.*

*Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth  
One charter of salvation, one God, one faith one birth  
One name together blessing, one holy food we share  
To one hope we are pressing at one in work and prayer*

*'Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of our war  
We wait the consummation of peace for evermore  
Till with the vision glorious, our longing eyes are blessed  
And the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.*

*Yet we on earth have union with God, the Three in One  
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won  
O happy ones and holy! God gives us grace that we  
Like them, the meek and lowly, may live eternally.*

**COLLECTIVE PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

*(The entire congregation is invited to form a circle while holding each other's hands each member is encourage to utter a SINGLE WORD that best describes their prayer for the entire Christian community until such time that everyone is able to do the same. In the end, the pastor will consolidate it into a summary prayer and end it together with the Lord's prayer)*



**The Lord's Prayer**

*(Traditional)*

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever.  
Amen.*

**BENEDICTION**

**Minister:** Go now remembering what we have done here. Go, remembering what God has done here. You are a forgiven people, eternally loved, charged to be obedient and responsible wherever you are. Here you have heard the Word of God proclaimed; Here you have sung praises to the Lord; Here you have witnessed God's Love at work among people: Now, go out into the world of work and play, proclaiming God's Word to others; singing God's praises with others; and witnessing to God's Love for others. Through Christ our Lord and Savior.

**ALL: AMEN**

**Song Response**

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**POSTLUDE  
RECESSIONAL**

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## REFERENCES:

-  **UCC Worship Ways Resource Guide** via [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)
-  **UCCP Sunday School and Liturgical Guides** via [www.uccpchurch.com](http://www.uccpchurch.com)
-  **The Open Hymnal**
-  **Hymnal of Faith Journey**
-  **Hymnary.org**