



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18 – 25, 2023

Every year, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU), Christian communities and churches join together to pray for the visible unity of the Church, according to the will of Christ who prayed on the eve of his suffering and death “that they may all be one... so that the world may believe” (John 17:21). Prayer for Christian unity is a sharing in the prayer of Jesus who desires his disciples to share the Good News of God’s love in every time and place.

The theme and resources for 2023 have been prepared by a group of Christians convened by the Minnesota Council of Churches in the USA. In the context of praying together for Christian unity, the 2023 theme, “**Do good; seek justice**” (Isaiah 1:17), invites us to reflect on what unites us and to commit ourselves to confront

oppression and division amongst humanity. God expects us as Christians to unite in a shared responsibility for equity for all God’s children as we bring the Good News of God’s love in Christ to a broken world in need of healing.

Over the last couple of years our customary way of marking the Week of Prayer here in Winnipeg with a City-Wide Ecumenical Service and other services throughout the week was curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the waning of the pandemic, in recent days some have been inquiring and suggesting it is time to return to the way we marked the week in earlier years.

With the 2023 Week of Prayer just a month away, the small remnant of our preparation committee does not have enough time to convene a gathering of representatives of various Christian churches and communities to organize a full week of events. Nevertheless, “to get the ball rolling” as they say, we at least are preparing a **City-wide Ecumenical Worship Service to be held at 7:30 pm on Sunday evening, January 22, 2023 at Saint John XXIII Church, Winnipeg**. Hopefully, this effort for the Week of Prayer in January 2023 will help to sow the seeds for other communities to volunteer to host the city-wide service and other Week of Prayer events in 2024 and on a rotating basis in the years beyond.

We cordially invite church leaders (i.e. bishops, moderators, presbytery chairs, etc. and/or their representatives) to join with Archbishop Richard Gagnon in taking an active part leading the worship during the upcoming City-wide Ecumenical Worship Service on January 22nd. If possible, we ask church leaders to please reserve the evening of January 22, 2023 on your calendar. If you will be unable to attend, we kindly ask that you try to arrange for someone else to represent your church/diocese/eparchy/denomination.

As done in earlier years, we plan to form an **Ecumenical Choir** for the upcoming City-wide Ecumenical Worship Service. Information concerning rehearsal times is included on one of the posters. Suggested bulletin announcements concerning choir rehearsals and the ecumenical worship service are also provided.

Please arrange to have the attached posters for the ecumenical worship service on January 22, 2023 and the bulletin announcements including choir invitation forwarded a.s.a.p. to the various parishes, congregations and other contacts within your community, diocese, eparchy or denomination. Thank you for your assistance.

In addition to the city-wide event to be held on January 22, 2023, we suggest that there still may be enough time for some churches/congregations around the city and in the rural areas to consider preparing and hosting a simple WPCU prayer service or WPCU bible study for Christians in their own congregation/parish and others in their neighbourhood. For those who wish to do this, WPCU resources are available online at www.weekofprayer.ca

After all the challenges and anguish of the past couple of years, let us join together and look to the future with faith and hope. Whether at the upcoming city-wide celebration, at events held in our own neighbourhoods, in person, privately, online virtually, or in our domestic churches with the members of our families, let us all do our best to find appropriate ways to reinvigorate our participation in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. May our prayers bring us into closer communion with all our brothers and sisters in Christ and in greater solidarity with people all around the world.